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COMPANY TRAINING

BY

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Commanding 5th Infantry Brigade

NINTH IMPRESSION

LONDON

HUGH REES LIMITED

5 REGENT STREET, S.W.

1917

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H157
H3

First Edition		*April*	1913—3000
Second Impression,		*September*	1914—1000
Third	,,	*October*	1914—1000
Fourth	,,	*November*	1914—2000
Fifth	,,	*January*	1915—2000
Sixth	,,	*March*	1915—2000
Sevneth	,,	*July*	1915—2000
Eighth	,,	*November*	1915—2000
Ninth	,,	*January*	1917—500

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PREFACE

THE object of this book is to assist officers in the training of their companies for war, either indoors, on the musketry range, or in the field. The regulations dealing with this subject are necessarily limited to the enunciation of principles, and cannot include suggestions as to what might be done to suit any particular situation or ground, because the situations are so numerous and the ground varies so greatly that volumes would have to be written before the subject could be dealt with in any comprehensive manner. It is thought, however, that if a few situations which arise frequently in war, and a few types of ground that are commonly met with, can be discussed and suggestions put forward as to how these situations and this ground should be treated, it may help in the solution of other situations on different ground. It is not suggested for a moment that the solutions recommended in this book are the best; the most that can be claimed for them is that the author has tried them all with actual troops on the ground and found them at least of practical, though by no means of universal, application. In any case the book may be useful to officers when preparing lectures for their men, or organizing a day's training on the ground for their company. Efforts have been made to accentuate the great importance of attack, and to consider the elements of human nature which have such a powerful influence in war when dealing with the various problems which arise.

R. H.

ALDERSHOT, 1913.

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COMPANY TRAINING

CHAPTER I

THE ELEMENT OF HUMAN NATURE IN WAR

No methods of training are thoroughly effective unless the strength and weakness of human nature are understood by the instructor. It is desirable, therefore, before entering into details regarding the various operations which have to be carried out by the infantry soldier in war, to consider how far human nature is likely to hinder and how far it will assist us in our task.

The idea of turning a man into a machine, by means of strict discipline, and thus making him more afraid of disobeying orders than of anything the enemy can do to him, has long since proved to be abortive. This method of training was only possible when infantry fought in close formation, when words of command were given by a battalion commander, and when it was easy to obey, because large bodies of infantry moved forward in great masses; one of the axioms of human nature being "to go with the crowd."

In modern war we are dependent for success upon the individual action of the infantry soldier. This action is greatly influenced by his state of mind at the moment, and by the power that can be exercised over his mind by his comrades and by those who are leading him. It is neces-

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sary to study, therefore, the characteristics of the human mind, with the object of ascertaining how we can influence the men under our command so that when they meet the enemy those human attributes which are favourable to our requirements may be strengthened, and those which are unfavourable may be weakened.

The characteristics or emotions of the human mind which, from a military point of view, require the most serious consideration are courage and fear, surprise, respect and disrespect, cheerfulness and dejection, comradeship, emulation and *esprit de corps*.

Good discipline means that all the qualities quoted above which are favourable to success in war have been improved during peace training, and that those which are detrimental to success have been eliminated to the greatest possible extent.

There is little doubt that the human characteristic of fear acts more powerfully upon the feelings of the individual soldier in war than any other emotion, and appears to be very infectious. In military society any discussion on the subject of fear, or its more violent form, cowardice, would be distasteful to every one. It is looked upon as a sort of skeleton in the cupboard which must be kept under lock and key and never allowed to appear. It is supposed to be accepted by every one that to be a soldier means to be a brave man, whereas the soldier, as a class, without proper training or without any experience, can be no braver than any other class of man in civil life.

Fear in its mild form is present in every human mind, and society could not get on without it. We look up a street to see if any vehicle is approaching before we cross over, because we are afraid of being run over; on a wet day we put on a mackintosh for fear of getting wet through and catching a cold; in fact, we rarely perform any action without taking precautions of some kind.

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These are all examples of reasonable fear, which, within bounds, is a perfectly legitimate attribute of a soldier in common with any other human being. For example, we teach our men to take advantage of all cover which is available when advancing to the attack, and we dig trenches when on the defence, in both cases to avoid being shot by the enemy. We employ the emotion of fear to overcome the emotion of surprise by taking precautions in the way of efficient scouting; in fact, the great part of command and staff work is wrapped up in forethought, which is only another word for legitimate fear.

It is the unreasoning type of fear that plays havoc with success in war, and the most deadly form of it as regards the infantry soldier is a vague and nameless dread of the enemy. If any man of ordinary intelligence was to try to analyse his feelings in war, and was to ask himself if he was actually afraid of being killed, he would probably find that he was not. The ordinary healthy trained soldier, whose nerves are in good order, is prepared to take his chance, with a comfortable feeling inside him that, although no doubt a great many people will be killed, he himself will probably escape. The same applies with equal force to being wounded: there is no doubt that many a man when he has been wounded has experienced a sort of relief; he is removed from what is called the stress of battle, which is really this vague fear of the enemy, and he does not mind the pain and risk of his wound, which is tangible, anything like so much as the tension of his previous experience. If, then, a man is not unreasonably afraid of being killed or wounded, is it not possible by previous training to overcome this vague fear of the enemy? If we could turn it from an unreasoning to a reasoning fear we should destroy more than half its evil effect on the ordinary infantry soldier. It appears that a good deal can be done in this way both morally

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and physically. It is invariably a good thing in war to place ourselves in the position of the enemy and endeavour to discover what we should be likely to do if we were in his shoes. The same applies to the soldier; if he is suffering from this vague fear of the enemy, it is at least a consolation to him to know that a great many other soldiers, including those belonging to the enemy, are suffering in a similar manner, and that they are simply experiencing one of the ordinary characteristics of the human mind. If the soldier in war can realize that the enemy is just as much afraid of him as he is of the enemy, reason is likely to assert itself and to a great extent overcome the unpleasant feelings inside him. If to this our soldier can add the knowledge that he can shoot better, advance more skilfully, and attack more vigorously than the enemy, his state of mind will improve still further, and he will go forward to battle in exactly the mental condition that we wish to produce by our training in peace—namely, confident of success. The physical methods of overcoming this type of fear are simply to divert the men's minds to other thoughts by giving them something for their bodies and limbs to do. It is a well-known saying that a man in battle frequently regains his lost courage by repeatedly firing off his rifle, which simply means that his thoughts are diverted by physical movement. On the other hand, when this dread has been allowed to become unreasonable, it has frequently occurred that men will not move at all, not even to fire their rifle, the enemy thus gaining complete superiority of fire. This is no doubt one of the reasons why the attack is so much more successful in war than the defence, because in the attack the men are frequently moving forward and having their minds diverted by physical motion from this vague dread of the enemy.

Many people think that young soldiers are superior to

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old soldiers because, like the fools and angels, they will step in where the veterans fear to tread. On the other hand, many authorities prefer the old soldier, and consider him morally and physically more capable of bearing the stress of battle. If any comparison between the two is desirable it is probable that the younger soldier will go into battle with more energy at first, but will be more affected by surprise or panic than the older man, who, perhaps, has had previous experience of war. Most armies at war strength have a mixture of both types, and one will no doubt counteract the other.

To study for a moment the reverse of the medal, actual courage in its highest form, namely, absolute immunity from any form of personal fear when in the presence of the enemy, is given to the few rather than to the many. It is, however, a gift of incalculable value because, like all other human characteristics, it is very infectious, and a brave leader who has no fear of the enemy will always get more out of his men than one who is not so well equipped in that respect. It is a well-known fact that a man may be brave far above his fellows in one calling or occupation, and extremely nervous in another. For example, a man may have greatly distinguished himself in the capture of some tactical locality who would not get on to a horse for fear of being kicked off. Courage of this kind is induced chiefly by habit and experience—the man knows the dangers and how to overcome them, he has been through similar experiences before and he has come out of them with a whole skin. The picture in *Punch* some few years ago of a man who is employed in pulling down a house, and who is standing on the top of a half-demolished chimney, is an excellent example of this type of courage. An aeroplane is passing overhead and our friend looks up and says, "I calls that a dangerous occupation." Neither the man in the aeroplane nor the

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man on the chimney would have cared to be in the other's shoes, although each was quite happy where he was. This type of courage is very valuable because it can be developed by careful training during peace. The stock of courage possessed by the individual soldier in war is greatly increased by self-confidence: he knows what to do in any emergency which may arise and how to do it; he will not be surprised by the unexpected event, which invariably occurs, and he will understand that others besides himself are being troubled by unpleasant feelings, which it is his duty as a man and a soldier to overcome.

Let us take, as an example, a small party of highly trained scouts and presuppose that originally each was liable to suffer from a vague dread of the enemy. The well-trained scouts know that the enemy is afraid of them; they believe that they are better trained than the enemy; they know exactly what to do to make the enemy's scouts retire, and they are much more likely to have sufficient courage to do it than the badly trained hostile scouts who have never received any instruction in the art of overcoming their own fears, or even in the best manner of dealing with the enemy when met.

The next in importance of the human characteristics is surprise, which is the mother of panic, the worst form of fear. In such a case unreasoning fear has turned into temporary insanity. Although panic is considered, generally, to be more infectious than courage, it is doubtful if this is the case. Numerous examples exist, both in civil and military life, of a panic being averted or stayed by the courageous action of a few individuals who by that means have succeeded in imposing their will on the mass, and bringing the people to a reasonable frame of mind. Surprise is caused in two ways, first by the neglect of some precaution on the part of the officer, non-commissioned officer, or man, and secondly by some

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action of the enemy which could not reasonably have been foreseen. In either case the effects on the minds of the men are equally adverse, and a successful issue from the difficulty depends entirely upon the courage not only of the officers and non-commissioned officers but also of as large a proportion as possible of the men.

Surprises occur so frequently in war, and usually with such disastrous results, that it appears to be advisable for this danger to be inquired into and dissected in peace so that at least it can be localized or mitigated when it occurs in front of the enemy. If every man in a company has been taught in peace that when surprised the only hope of success is to obey implicitly the orders of his immediate commander, either to fire, advance, change direction, or hold his ground, according to the instructions given, some few of the men at least will retain sufficient composure to act on their peace training, and their example to the remainder may turn the scale in the favour of courage, and instead of disaster a brilliant success may be recorded.

Surprises in war are not limited to the ordinary acceptance of the term, such as a sudden attack from an unexpected direction. The soldier who goes into battle and hears the snip of a bullet, or sees a shell burst in front of him, is surprised if he has not been taught in peace that these have to be faced, and that for one bullet that hurts anyone thousands have to be fired. Similarly, a man sees a comrade knocked over: the horrors of war are immediately brought home to him, and his courage begins to ebb—he has been surprised because he has not realized in peace that men are bound to be killed and wounded in war. He has not been taught that when his comrade has been knocked out of time the best thing he can do is to get a little back on his own, and try to knock out one of the enemy's comrades.

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Revenge is not a Christian emotion to carry through the world, but it is a powerful lever to induce courage in war. The whole atmosphere of battle is a surprise to the ordinary soldier who has had no previous experience; the enemy is everywhere, behind every bush, and lurking in every bit of cover, the air is full of bullets, and any advance towards the formidable-looking position which is held by the enemy appears to be suicidal. The soldier, if properly trained in peace, will not be greatly surprised at his novel surroundings; he will know that the enemy is not everywhere, and that one bullet sounds much more dangerous than it really is, and that the sound of five or six bullets to his untrained ear are apt to make him think he is under a very heavy fire. A bullet sounds quite close when it is fifty yards away, and if we take a black-board and make a rectangle a hundred yards long by fifty high (say 50 inches by 25), and put a man on the same scale in the centre at the foot of the board, the height of the man when standing upright will be one inch and his breadth half an inch. If we then dot a few bullet marks inside the rectangle, all of which would be heard by the man, he will understand that he is not very easy to hit even when he is standing up, especially at long ranges, and still more difficult to hit when he is lying down firing at the enemy.

The next characteristic of the human mind to consider is respect, which, like charity, should begin at home. A man who respects himself knows how to respect other people—that is to say, he can appreciate the good military qualities possessed by others because he possesses them himself. These are the men that form the backbone of the company, and are the best material on which to work in order to raise the general standard of courage in battle. It may be said that a man who has no self-respect is, nevertheless, capable of respecting others; but

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if we read fearing instead of respecting we shall come nearer the truth, and fear, possessed by the individual for his comrade or superior, though a useful attribute in some circumstances, is not so valuable as respect, because it does not produce such a high standard of discipline. The ordinary man respects another man because the latter possesses some good qualities, or excels at some occupation which the former understands. A man must be very low in the world to respect another man for his bad qualities; for example, a man in the company who is addicted to drink may be feared by other men or may even carry great weight in leading other men astray, but no one will respect him. If that same man has, however, certain inherent good military qualities and distinguishes himself on service where he can get no drink, the other men will then respect him.

It is a mistake to imagine that all that is required from a soldier is respect to his officers and non-commissioned officers. A soldier is a human being; if he possesses self-respect he will respect all that is good in his comrades, and they will respect all that is good in him. A man can never respect himself as highly as he respects other people, because he knows all his own weak points much better than he knows those of others. A man who has more respect for himself than for anyone else is suffering from self-conceit, and can be described by a little word spelt with four letters—p-r-i-g.

From a purely military point of view it is absolutely necessary for an officer, non-commissioned officer, or man to possess some marked military qualifications in order to gain respect from others. This respect engenders confidence in others, and without confidence in their comrades and their leaders troops will rarely gain a hardly contested fight. Self-respect in the individual can be encouraged, not by fulsome praise, but by a quiet

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appreciation of the good military qualities displayed by him, and by making use of those qualities whenever an opportunity occurs. For example, if a young soldier or non-commissioned officer is seen to do a good bit of scouting, the first opportunity should be taken of giving him a similar task, if possible in a more responsible position or on a more important occasion. Knowledge is a powerful factor in the production of respect, and is probably second only to determination of character. It is essential, therefore, that all officers and non-commissioned officers should possess a thorough knowledge of the art of leading troops in the field, even if they are not first-class instructors. An officer or non-commissioned officer who is not good at imparting his ideas to those under him may still retain their respect if they find that he can deal correctly with any situation which may arise in the field. Personal courage and example are also powerful aids to the creation of respect in others.

Cheerfulness, as a military quality, is extremely valuable in war; like all other characteristics of the human being, it is very infectious, and in times of considerable depression, such as during a long siege or after the failure of an attack, it does more than anything else to restore the fighting power of the men. A non-commissioned officer or man who is always cheery, and apt to look on the bright rather than the dark side of things, is well worth his rations in war, even though he may have some military disadvantages in other ways.

Content amongst troops in war is dependent upon three main factors—good leading, good food, and sufficient shelter and sleep. Of these the first is by far the most important, because it has been proved time after time in war that badly fed and badly quartered troops, who have suffered great hardships, will still be content and will fight in the most gallant and vigorous manner

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provided they are well led. Although good leading emanates in the first instance from the highest military authorities in the army, a great deal depends upon the company officers and non-commissioned officers. A good leader as a rule is careful for the comforts of his men; he obtains the best food and best shelter available, he does not wear out the men by unnecessary movements or unnecessary work, either in the field or in camp, and consequently when he does order the men to do anything they know at once that it is necessary and do it cheerfully. Discontent should be distinguished from the ordinary grumbling of a few individuals. There are some people who are never happy unless they are complaining; they soon become recognized by the rest of the community amongst whom they are placed, and looked upon either as bores or as a butt for friendly jokes. As a rule they do little harm, especially when no one takes them seriously.

Comradeship as a military characteristic is not given the value it deserves. What a world of meaning there is in the words "me and my mate," so often heard in civil life, but with hardly a counterpart in the Army. A soldier in the Army has many acquaintances, a few friends, but rarely has he got a "mate." It appears that if such a combination could be introduced the military value of every two men would be greatly increased. In times of great danger two men who are mates will not shirk so easily as two independent men. The best in one man comes to the surface and dominates any bad military points in the other. They help each other in countless ways in war, and if one is unfortunately killed or wounded the other would probably wish to square accounts with the enemy at the earliest possible opportunity. The human being does not thrive well in solitude, and to many men there is no greater desert than a

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barrack-room or camp. There appears to be no serious military reason why men should not be encouraged to choose a mate and work in pairs whenever the requirements of the situation permit, and although they would often be separated, especially in peace, the more general introduction of such a system would be of great military value in war.

Emulation is so frequently mixed up with jealousy that its true meaning is sometimes obscured. It is part of the birthright of every human being to use every honest endeavour to rise above his fellows; the same applies to a collection of human beings such as a company of infantry. To be the best in the battalion at everything should be the desire of every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man in the company. If this is out of the question the company can at least endeavour to be best in one good military quality. It is not so much the actual military value of the success which is gained as the self-respect which is thereby engendered amongst all ranks. If the company cannot be the best at games, athletics, or shooting, there are other branches of military life where they can endeavour to excel, such as smartness on parade, on fatigue, or on the line of march, good fire discipline, rapid and intelligent appreciation of ground in attack or defence, &c. Success in any of these will increase the self-respect and consequently the fighting value of the company.

Esprit de corps as a military asset has been given great prominence in the past, but it has not always proved such a firm rock as many people seem to imagine, and in some cases has been a cloak for habits or customs which have in no way increased the military efficiency of a unit. It is no doubt a very laudable and desirable idea that every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man in a battalion should look upon his battalion as the

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best in the Army. Unfortunately, however, with the numerous inspections and reports of modern days, the fact is constantly brought home to the battalion that it is certainly not the best, and every one in the battalion knows it full well. If this is the case, it is necessary to seek further afield for *esprit de corps*, and it is not difficult to find a really valuable military quality in the past history of the regiment, especially if the stirring events in which the regiment has played an important and successful part are brought home to the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men who are now serving in it. It is customary to select an anniversary of one of the greatest battles in which the regiment has taken part and to celebrate the victory in the time-honoured manner of holding regimental sports, &c. There is nothing to say against this provided every one has an eye to military advancement, and the part taken by the regiment in the battle, the hardships endured by the men, and the strenuous opposition which was overcome are thoroughly understood by every one. What we desire to teach is a spirit of emulation; if our forefathers could do these things, it is quite certain that we ought to be able to do the same. There are some people who think that the task before our ancestors in battle was easier than the work in front of us to-day. Perhaps our ancestors thought the same about their forefathers, but, if so, the idea did not hinder them during their energetic and successful efforts to attack, defeat, and drive back the enemy.

Closely allied to *esprit de corps* is what is commonly designated under the general term "duty." It was used with what we are told was magical effect at the commencement of the greatest naval battle in the world's history. It is doubtful, however, whether in modern democratic days the ideas conveyed by the word posses

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the powerful influence of the past. The modern interpretation of the word duty, especially in military circles, does not convey that enthusiastic desire for military success which is so vital to the battle. It is probable that the hatred of being beaten, which is such a marked characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race, is a much more effective spur to effort on the battlefield than any sense of duty. If a soldier is asked whether he is doing his duty, he will probably say, "No, I am employed as a waiter in the officers' mess." The word "duty" to the modern soldier means attending every field-day and parade which is held, as opposed to a soft job in barracks.

There is no doubt that it is the duty of the soldier, whatever rank he may be, to fight his country's battles and to do his utmost to win them; but if a soldier was asked why he acted in this excellent manner, he would give many reasons before he selected the word "duty." It seems such a dull word, and to contain such a dull meaning to express the brilliant exploits which must be performed by the soldiers who win success in battle. Presumably it includes love of country and desire to defeat any enemy who threatens the continued existence of the Empire; but, if so, it would be better to inculcate these estimable intentions in a more definite manner and describe them as patriotism. If we were to confine ourselves to doing our duty on a modern battlefield, it is doubtful if we should gain much success. Some of the most brilliant achievements which have been initiated and carried out by soldiers in war, and which have produced the most far-reaching results in the progress of a campaign, have gone greatly beyond the term "duty," as interpreted in the present day. Love of our country, colonies, and dependencies, and love of our Anglo-Saxon race, which has spread itself over the two hemispheres, is a far more potent incentive to brilliant and successful operations on a battle-

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field than any sense of duty. Let us, therefore, teach our soldiers what Britain has won in the past by the life-blood of their forefathers; let them understand the value of the possessions we have gained, make them realize the greatness of the Empire, and show them that it is worth fighting for, and that no one shall take it away from us. This is a far higher incentive to heroic and successful action on the battlefield than any sense of duty.

Finally we come to the most powerful aid to success possessed by the human mind: determination of character. Every human being has a certain amount of this determination; the most contemptible weakling can at least decide upon the small things of life, and every individual varies in an ascending degree until we reach the great men of ancient and modern times who have subdued nations to their will and practically dominated the world. Some individuals are born with more determination than others, and thus start life with a great advantage in their favour; but it is a mistake to suppose that a man must remain through life with the same amount of character that he brought into it. The attributes of the human mind, such as determination, bravery, ambition, energy, &c., are all capable of improvement and also of deterioration. These are totally different from gifts or talents, such as the power of painting, the art of music, the gift of tongues, &c., which come easily to some people under proper instruction, but which others are incapable of learning to the extent of producing satisfactory results. It is essential, therefore, for us to endeavour by all means in our power to improve our strength of character. It is useless for us to learn the art of war if we have not sufficient will-power, when we meet the enemy, to apply the principles we have studied. It is useless for us to teach our men to do things that we should not ask them to do in war, and it is waste of time to draw up schemes for operations that

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would require far more determination than we possess to bring to a successful conclusion. There is no reason, however, why every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man should not improve his determination of character and will-power by careful training in peace. It can only be done by facing the difficulties, thoroughly understanding the dangers, and asking ourselves repeatedly whether we are prepared to face the ordeal in war.

Do not let us leave it until war comes; do not let us think, in a vague sort of way, that in war we shall be all right and do as well as most people. We know that we are not gifted with tremendous personal courage, and we know that, whatever happens, we shall not run away. But that is not enough. We must train ourselves to understand that unless in the day of trial we can harden our hearts, assume the initiative in a most obscure situation, and retain it by constant advance and constant attack, avoiding all such sophistries as the offensive defensive, the delaying action, the waiting for reinforcements, &c., we cannot hope to play a dominating part even in a humble sphere on the battlefield.

Before dismissing the workings of the human mind in battle it appears to be desirable to mention the uses and abuses of the white flag. It is very easy to condemn in no measured terms the employment of this means of stopping a fight, especially when one was not present and could not appreciate the immediate situation or the moral and physical condition of the troops at the moment. It may be assumed safely that in almost every instance the white flag has been put up by an officer because he is convinced that the operation he is engaged upon has failed, and that to continue the struggle would only mean the useless loss of his men's lives. We cannot accept this theory, however, and adopt it for universal application without making certain of two very important

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points. First, is the officer quite sure that the operation has failed, and, secondly, is any further loss of life useless? The only officer who can answer these questions is the commander of the force who is conducting the operation. For example, in an attack by a division or a brigade it would be the divisional or brigade commander, *and no one else.* He is the only authority who can judge whether the operation has failed and whether further loss of life is necessary. Probably the only occasion when a company commander would ever possess the right to put up the white flag would be when he is employed on outpost duty, when the outpost companies to the right and left of him have been driven back by the enemy, when his own retreat is completely cut off, and when he has already offered a strenuous resistance and suffered many casualties.

What has led to so many disasters in war is the use of the white flag by irresponsible people. Thus the officer or non-commissioned officer in command of some detachment, either in attack or defence, has surrendered to save the lives of his own men, with the result that the whole of the rest of the force has followed suit. There is no army in the world that is less accustomed to the use of the white flag than ours, for the good reason that we have been employed in numerous campaigns where surrender meant certain death, and where prolonged resistance and, as a last resort, a vigorous attack were far preferable. In the South African War, however, against a civilized enemy, examples of the use of the white flag were more frequent than was absolutely necessary. It is a mistake to suppose that they were more frequent than in other campaigns fought between civilized nations, especially on the losing side; but the fact remains that had the rule given above been invariably adopted, the number of instances would have been greatly reduced, and consequently the number of avoidable disasters.

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A study of past campaigns will show us that numerous examples exist of the most heroic efforts, made by our forefathers in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances, which have terminated successfully, and have not only set a noble example to the rest of the army, but have influenced for good the whole course of the campaign. For example, one or two companies on advanced guard who retain possession of some important locality in spite of the heaviest losses, and when the arrival of reinforcements is unaccountably delayed, would be a splendid example to the whole army, and might easily cause the difference between success and failure during the subsequent battle.

It is necessary for us to realize that in many cases the temptation to use the white flag is very great. The captain has just been knocked out; the subaltern, who has had no responsibility hitherto for the conduct of the operations, suddenly finds himself in command. The junior subaltern or the senior non-commissioned officer may express the opinion that further resistance is useless; even the men themselves may demand a surrender. In such circumstances the subaltern is a fine gallant soldier and a fine leader to maintain the fight, and even if he and most of his men are eventually killed or wounded, the behaviour of that detachment will never be forgotten in the regiment or in the army.

Before using the white flag, therefore, let us consider these things, let us make quite sure that we are in command of the whole operation that is being carried out, and that further loss of life is absolutely useless. Then, and then only, are we justified in putting up the white flag. It should be remembered always that the most soldierly way out of what looks like an impossible situation is by an attack. The moral effect upon the enemy of an attack, even by a small force, is enormous. It

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invariably upsets his plans, it usually stops his advance and creates delay, and when night is approaching every moment's delay is invaluable, because under cover of darkness a determined commander, with well-trained soldiers, can extricate himself from the most extraordinarily difficult situations.

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CHAPTER II

THE EFFECT IN WAR OF HABITS GAINED DURING PEACE

It is said, with much truth, that the human being is a creature of habit, and we are all aware that a habit becomes stronger and more part of our nature according as we cultivate or indulge it. There are good and bad military habits which it is desirable for us to recognize, so that when we go to war we may be trained to adopt those which are good and, as far as possible, be free of those which are bad. Perhaps the worst of all military habits, to use a slang expression, is to "let things slide," or to wait on events. This habit, if indulged in, becomes part of our character and is allied to the worst form of the "kismet" of Eastern nations.

Every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man in the Army should be trained to avoid this habit, and to adopt instinctively its direct opposite, which can best be described in the well-known term "initiative." There have been in the past all kinds of checks on initiative, perhaps the most powerful being the fear of doing something wrong. In war it is so easy to do nothing, to stay where we are, to carry out our orders or instructions and no more, and when a fresh situation arises, which cannot be dealt with according to our original directions, the temptation to cease active and progressive operations becomes very great. Many plausible reasons occur to our minds to show why

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we should not act on our own initiative. If we adopt a certain course of action we may be upsetting the plans of our superior commander; if, on the other hand, we send back and explain the new situation we shall, in a short time, receive the necessary orders. Meanwhile, of course, the situation will change and the opportunity for successful action will pass away. The enemy in front of us may appear to be in far greater strength than our original instructions led us to suppose, or the ground in front may be far more difficult to deal with, either in attack or defence, than we imagined would be the case. The enemy's fire may be too heavy or the ground too much exposed, securities on our flank which originally existed may be no longer forthcoming, artillery support which at first was available is no longer possible owing to the ground or other causes. There are dozens of reasons, according to the nature of the situation, why we should do little or nothing, and only one reason why we should act on our initiative, a reason which is not sufficiently understood and taught in peace time, namely, to win the battle. Every campaign that is fought in modern times demonstrates one rule of war which can never vary. It is said there are no rules of war, that there are only principles, which are difficult to understand and still more difficult to apply; but this is not true. There is one rule which can never be departed from and which will alone lead to success, and that is always to push forward, always to attack. If every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man in the army could be imbued with this spirit and could understand that when he is scouting he must push on, drive back, or avoid the enemy's scouts; when he is attacking that he must reach the enemy's trenches as rapidly as possible; and when he is defending that his attitude is only temporary and that he must hold his ground at all costs, so that either his

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company later on or other companies elsewhere can advance to the attack: then his peace training will not have been in vain, and what any soldier or company has done in the past he and his company can do now.

So we see that of all military habits the most important is the habit of acting on our own initiative, and pushing on in spite of the difficulties and dangers which are absolutely certain to rise up in front of us, and which must be overcome by a vigorous offensive if success is to be gained.

The cautious individual who considers many possible courses of action, realizes the danger of each and sees no great advantage to be obtained by vigorous action, will say that there are many occasions in war when it is impossible to apply this rule, and that after all it is not a rule for universal application—it is merely one of those objectionable principles invented by the theorists, and quite impossible for the ordinary company commander to apply. It is certainly true that when a company is ordered definitely to entrench and defend a certain locality, either as part of an outpost or of a defensive position, that company does not move forward to the attack. On this occasion, however, the situation has not changed, the orders are definite and are being carried out; the offensive spirit is for the moment resting, but directly the situation changes and the enemy either retires or fails to attack, or he attacks from an unexpected direction, the initiative must be taken and the offensive spirit immediately aroused, or it will be too late to take advantage of a favourable opportunity or to avert an impending disaster.

In a company where all ranks are trained to act on their own initiative and to realize that no success can be gained in war without offensive action they will leave their trenches to deliver a counterstroke or leave cover in the attack far more readily than when no attention has

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been paid to this matter in peace time. In the one case we have the soldier trained to habits of offensive action, and in the other case we have the half soldier, half civilian, and we may be sure that the civilian will predominate and reason without any qualifying habit: will say, "Why leave this comfortable security for almost certain death?" It may be said that if our soldiers are trained to act on their own initiative there will be no order or cohesion in any operation which may be in progress. This is merely a confusion of ideas; a man goes forward, halts, lies down, and gets up by the exercise of his own energy and initiative. If he is trained in peace time to exercise his initiative in this manner and it becomes a habit with him, and, further, if he is trained to understand that nothing but an attack will win a battle, he may be expected to exercise the same initiative when his squad is ordered to advance in face of the enemy. The initiative of the officer is to order a forward movement or fresh dispositions to meet a change in the situation. The initiative of the soldier is to act according to the instructions he receives. If he is properly trained in habits of initiative he will advance at a run when speed is necessary, he will husband his energies and walk when there is no occasion to go faster, he will be prepared to cover a long stretch of ground at a rapid rate without a halt when he sees that such action will assist the advance of the company, and he will halt in a good fire position instead of passing it and halting in a bad one. Men trained in these habits can be relied upon to keep up their fire even when exposed to a deadly hostile fire, to advance over ground which appears to be absolutely swept with the enemy's bullets, and on the defensive to hold on in the most tenacious manner against all attacks and at the same time be prepared at any moment to deliver an attack towards the enemy.

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Men who have not been trained to use their own initiative will rely constantly upon the officer or non-commissioned officer for exact orders or instructions; they will not be ready to meet an order or signal half way; their tendency in difficult and dangerous situations will be to stay where they are, and on occasions it will be difficult or even impossible to get them to use their rifles with effect. It is not suggested that it is practicable to train every man in a company to reach such a high standard of military excellence, but every effort made in this direction does a little to remove a bad habit learnt in civil life and to build up a good one. A certain number of men will be greatly improved, and these will influence for good the remainder.

Another bad habit which should be checked during peace training is personal neglect on the part of the individual for his own comfort and health. A man will come in very tired after a long march, and will lie down and go to sleep, when he ought to be looking after his boots, rifle, and equipment, making arrangements for shelter for himself and his comrades for the night, and getting everything ready for an immediate start at any hour during the night.

When a well-trained company goes into billets or bivouacs for the night, the officers and non-commissioned officers should have few orders to issue, the men should understand that they must look after themselves, and that it is a military crime to neglect their own bodies, comfort, and kit.

Relaxation of small regulations, such as saluting officers, is a habit which is apt to grow upon men during a campaign. This simply means that the moral qualities of the men are deteriorating; they are losing their self-respect as soldiers, and, in consequence, they are losing their respect for others. To pretend not to see an officer

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when passing near a camp or bivouac is a bad sign from the point of view of military efficiency. The same applies to smartness on parade, at least twice during the day, once when falling in and marching out of bivouacs, and again when marching in and dismissing at night.

There is in every community a certain number of individuals who appear to take an unholy delight in running down their own comrades—it calls to mind the ancient adage that it is an evil bird which fouls its own nest. If the mischief extended no further than the individual who commits this military crime, it could be dealt with by allowing him to reap his own reward. Unfortunately, however, it has a bad effect on others, because it tends to weaken their confidence in themselves and still more in their comrades and in their superiors. Every officer, non-commissioned officer and man should commence a campaign with the firm conviction in his mind that his own army is better than any other, of approximately equal size, that can be opposed to it. This is a feeling that we have repeatedly experienced when engaged in any of our frontier campaigns, and it has stood us in good stead when we have been faced with overwhelming odds, and have just managed to scrape out of a tight place by the most heroic action on the part of the troops, or, failing this, have met a soldier's death with our faces to the foe.

It appears, however, at the present time, both in the Press and in ordinary conversation, to be a favourite habit to run down the soldier, his officers, and, in fact, the Army as a whole. Anyone can abuse the Army with impunity because he is perfectly aware that the Army is prevented by regulation from replying, and probably would not do so if it could. We hear that the training is bad, whereas it is probably the best in the world; the men are immature weaklings, whereas they can march from twenty

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to thirty miles in division, in full marching order, without undue fatigue; the officers are not professional soldiers and think far more of their sports and pastimes than of their work, whereas there is no keener body of men in the world, and no one who can get so much out of the troops as they can. Their very sports and pastimes are in themselves excellent training for war, engendering habits of initiative and dash, and fitting them body and soul to become good leaders in battle. The evil is, unfortunately, not confined to people who are outside the Army, but is constantly met with in all ranks in the Army. No doubt some human beings are born with a pessimistic spirit, to act as a scourge on their more fortunate and more cheery brethren, but even such individuals might be taught to leave their comrades out of their habitual maledictions and confine themselves to abuse of other organizations or institutions. Let them devote their energies in this direction towards the abuse of the War Office authorities, who, clad in the armour of supreme military power, can safely laugh at any of their fulminations. Or let them abuse the Government, who are comfortably in office, with the majority of the representatives of the nation behind them, and are accustomed to such futile attacks. In any case do not let us permit them to weaken even in the smallest degree our confidence in ourselves and in our comrades.

An army that has to be told, with truth, that it is the worst-led and worst-trained army in Europe has gone so far downhill that such information will not do it the least bit of good. If that is the case, instead of talking, it is time for the nation to set to work and produce a better one. Honest criticism by anyone who knows anything at all about soldiering, and frequently by ignorant onlookers who see a good deal of the game, is in every way excellent, and often produces improvement. The Press can say just what they please, and the ordinary

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civilian can say what he likes, but when a man has once become a soldier he arrogates to himself a vast amount of knowledge and experience when he lays down to others that his superiors or his comrades are bad.

A certain class of individuals appear to think that if they abuse everybody and everything, they show the world what very excellent people they are themselves, whereas the contrary is the direct result. If Captain Jones goes to Captain Smith and abuses not only Captain Robinson but any other mutual acquaintance whose name may crop up in the course of conversation, Captain Smith knows full well that five minutes later Captain Jones will be abusing him and his methods of training. It is not, however, the officers, so much as the men, who are adversely affected in this way. Let us do everything we possibly can to create a feeling of superiority amongst the rank and file. Whilst we are training them we are bound to find fault, or our training would be useless; but let us also point out things that have been well done as well as those which require improvement. Like everything else in the world, training cannot stand still—it must be either improving or deteriorating: when it is improving, let the men know it; as it goes on improving, let them understand the advances they have made and appreciate the fact that they are approaching the goal of every good company—thorough efficiency for war, especially in the attack. Let us also keep an eye on our friend who goes about the regiment abusing everything in it, and, as opportunity occurs, let us pay him back in his own coin, and do a little towards checking, if not curing, his evil habit.

The relations which exist in peace time between the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of a company become a habit, and, as such, can exercise a good or evil influence in war. British officers are proverbially cele-

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brated for the good understanding which exists between them and their men, so that we should have, in this respect, an advantage over any other nation. It is necessary, however, for us to make the most of this important military asset, and encourage young officers and non-commissioned officers in every way we can to maintain the high standard which already exists.

These relations are dependent to a great extent upon the characteristics of individuals, but can be influenced and improved by careful training and by a study of the standard of excellence which it is desirable to aim at.

Many of us who are still serving remember the time when the instruction of subordinates by superior military authorities took the form of criticism. The general was prepared at any time to say that things were wrong, and this method of instruction was passed down until it reached the lance-corporal and private. Very few officers were prepared to follow their criticisms by saying what ought to have been done, and if we consider human nature we can easily supply the reason for this. Directly an individual says a thing has been done wrong, and that it ought to have been done in such and such a manner, he himself becomes liable to criticism, and unless he has a thorough knowledge of his subject, he is unable to prove that the method he has suggested is any better than the course of action adopted by the subordinate.

At the present time, although we hear a great deal of criticism, we also hear many suggestions as to what ought to have been done. We don't agree with these suggestions at the moment, and we continue to think our own plan was the best; but, nevertheless, the suggestions sink in, and next time we are similarly situated we usually, consciously or unconsciously, adopt them.

A man who blames a recruit for doing something badly should first blame himself for having failed to show

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him the proper way to do it. That is the reason why progressive training is insisted upon in our regulations. A recruit learns his trade step by step; he does not jump about from one type of military operation to another in one morning's work. If he is being taught the attack, he is shown first how to cover the ground when he is too far off to use his rifle, where to halt for rest and where not to halt, when to run and when to walk, what formations are best to avoid artillery fire, &c. The next stage in the proceedings is to teach him how to use his rifle and the ground when he is close enough to the enemy's position to be able to fire with effect, and so on until the final assault. If a man does wrong at the first stage, he may be stupid and he may not understand, but we have to deal with stupid men as well as clever men, and there are very few men who cannot be turned into fairly efficient soldiers by careful instruction.

The first point therefore that we must clearly understand in the relations between the officers, the non-commissioned officers, and the men is that every superior authority must possess sufficient knowledge to instruct his subordinates, and that in case of failure the responsibility lies more with the instructor than with those under him.

It is important for military efficiency, in the present day, that cordial and sympathetic relations should exist between all ranks. In the old days of stern discipline the officer, and still more the non-commissioned officer, frequently approached the methods of the slave-driver in their relations with the men. This was considered necessary for discipline, and unreasoning obedience was all that was required. We still want obedience and we still want discipline, but not the hide-bound type of fifty or a hundred years ago, when the soldier was a machine, whose body moved in obedience to definite words of

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command, but whose intelligence and initiative were rarely called into play.

There is a vast difference between familiarity and cordial relations between ranks. There are some gifted individuals who can be very familiar with subordinates without in any degree losing the respect of the junior for the senior; there are others who cannot achieve this, and some, in consequence, adopt a stern and repellent manner. Officers and non-commissioned officers in their relations with those below them should start from the standpoint that these men by enlisting have placed their lives, health, and comfort at the disposal of those above them. They have absolute power in war and very considerable power in peace to deal with those men in whatever manner they think fit. They are armed with punishments to enforce their will, and they can make life bearable or unbearable to individual soldiers, according to the manner in which they treat them.

We have seen already that good discipline means a great deal more than the unhesitating obedience of every order that is received, although perhaps that is the foundation upon which it is laid. There is no doubt whatever that every soldier in the army, of whatever rank he may be, must obey the orders and instructions he receives; in fact, he must go further and do what is called "play the game." At the same time, if we limit our efforts in the establishment of discipline to this alone, we shall not be getting the best out of those characteristics of the human mind which have been discussed already.

Perhaps the best means of improving the relations between officers, non-commissioned officers, and men is to foster a spirit of comradeship—for those in authority to remember always that they are dealing with human beings like themselves subject to similar feelings, similar

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errors, and possessing similar virtues. Perpetual blame can never produce good results, whereas recognition of those things which have been well done, together with a clear explanation of those details which require improvement, will do far more to produce efficiency than any bald statement that everything is bad. If a man or a section acts unskilfully during training, the first thing to ascertain is whether it was done through ignorance, or because it was considered to be the right thing to do, or through carelessness. In the first case the fault lies chiefly with the instructor, who has not sufficiently explained the application of the principles involved. In the second case inquiries should be made to ascertain why the man or section thought it was the right thing to do, followed by explanations to show the evil effect such a method would produce in war, and finally our explanation of the correct action to be adopted, accompanied by the reason why it is correct and why it is better than what was actually done. In the third case the fault lies entirely with the man or the section, and it is time for the mailed fist to appear through the velvet glove. Nothing can excuse carelessness, which is a military offence, probably more productive of failure in war than any other habit, and should never be allowed to pass unnoticed.

Knowledge and skilful leading are the great levers which produce good discipline, far more than any system of punishment, which can be reserved for acts of disrespect, carelessness, insubordination, &c. If a soldier looks upon his superior as an individual who will always do his best for him, always be ready to help him in difficulties, and believes that he knows much more about the work in hand than he knows himself, whilst at the same time he knows that his superior will stand no nonsense, things are going as they should do.

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There are some officers and non-commissioned officers who are not naturally gifted with a power to command others and whose orders do not appear to carry sufficient weight to ensure immediate and cheerful obedience. Such individuals can, by realizing their deficiencies and doing their utmost to strengthen their character, do a great deal to improve their military efficiency. The most common sign of weakness in this respect is a feeling of disinclination to give orders, or to insist upon their being carried out, especially at a time when things are not going very well, or when the men are very tired. Whenever this feeling is experienced, every effort should be made to overcome it, care being taken to avoid the opposite extreme, as so frequently occurs, and which tends to the issue of orders in an irritating manner, or to the issue of wavering orders accompanied by explanations as to why it is necessary to do a certain thing. Such explanations, though desirable during training, especially with the young recruit, have no place in a situation where actual work has to be carried out, with possibly the enemy in front of us. Men are quick to appreciate when they have to obey an officer or non-commissioned officer at once, and when there is not sufficient powder in the cartridge to drive the bullet home. They discover this during peace training from many opportunities they have of judging, so that it is essential at all times not to hesitate in grasping the thistle; and if an order is necessary, it must invariably be given, and if a military error is observed, it must always be taken notice of; by this means only can an officer improve his powers of command and establish that feeling of respect amongst his subordinates which will ensure the immediate and cheerful obedience of any orders that he may give. In this connexion it is desirable never to give unnecessary orders or to withdraw an order once given. An officer or non-commissioned officer should

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have sufficient knowledge to know what ought to be done, and if he is in doubt he should consider the circumstances and decide upon his course of action before issuing the order. Thoughtless orders lead to counter-orders, and there is nothing which tries the men more than being hustled about without any progress being made in the matter in hand.

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CHAPTER III

THE ART OF INDOOR INSTRUCTION

It would be a dull world if every one possessed the same gifts and the same characteristics of mind; fortunately, however, this is not the case, and whilst some individuals excel in one art, profession, or occupation, others are distinguished in another. The usual procedure, when we wish to practise some science is to devote a great deal of time and study to its acquisition. In fact, except with very gifted or very dull individuals, the results obtained usually vary in direct proportion to the amount of labour expended on the subject. Few, however, appear to think it is necessary to teach young officers and non-commissioned officers how to instruct those under them. They have a training manual which contains all the important principles of tactics, but which is necessarily limited in size, and cannot produce examples to show how these principles can be applied. There is no book, however, which teaches the young officer how to arrange the information he has gained from his training manual and how to put that information into words so that he can convey it to the minds of his men. It is very easy for an officer or non-commissioned officer to say that he cannot lecture to the men and then to dismiss the matter; or, if he is compelled to lecture, to do it so badly that the men learn little or nothing. Every audience has the right to demand interesting and valuable instruction when it is assembled to

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listen to a lecture. Take the example of the parson in church, one parson is a good instructor and he will interest his congregation and fix their attention; he has learnt his subject, he has studied the art of teaching, and he can convey his ideas to his listeners in a manner which both interests and instructs them. Another parson is quite incapable of doing this, for the simple reason that he does not know his subject or that he has never learnt how to instruct other people. He repeats himself, his arguments are not always very sound, he is very dull, and after the first few minutes the congregation begin to think of other things or go to sleep. There is another type of parson who reads his sermons, which are written out in full; he does this because he has never learnt to preach extempore. The matter contained in his discourse is probably well arranged and instructive, but any form of reading aloud is not easy to follow, it is invariably monotonous, and the results on the congregation are usually soporific. The British officer is very like the parson in this respect, and if he finds it dull listening to the parson in church it would be instructive for him to consider whether his men find it dull when they are listening to him.

There are two essentials which must be in existence before any indoor instructions can be really satisfactory, first the instructor must have a good deal more knowledge of his subject than the mass of his audience, and secondly he must speak and not read. It is the object of this chapter to show how, with a little trouble, any officer who considers himself incapable of delivering a lecture can teach himself to become quite at home in this important part of his duties.

To return once more to the ordinary human being, some individuals are extremely self-conscious or shy. These qualities may have their uses in private life but they are not much good in the army. The soldier is a

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person who has to face the enemy in war, a much more dangerous task than facing an audience in a lecture room, yet there are many soldiers who would be quite happy going into battle but who would dread giving a lecture. The only thing for such people to do is to overcome their failing, because unless a man can teach his subordinates in peace time he is not fulfilling his life's work, and however good he may be in war his men will not be sufficiently well trained to defeat the enemy without unnecessary loss of life. It is quite a common thing to listen to an officer sustaining a conversation on some military subject in a most able manner, showing that he possesses a full knowledge of the subject, but if he is asked to explain his views to an audience he has great difficulty in doing so. He forgets half his points, he fails to produce his most telling arguments and his lecture is not a quarter as good as his conversation.

The first thing that is required is an effort of will—we must forget ourselves, forget the audience if absolutely necessary, and concentrate our minds upon the subject we are discussing. The whole truth is that we must get out of the habit of self-consciousness and into the habit of stringing a few ideas together, and delivering them in plain and simple language to our audience. Habits, good or bad, grow upon us, and every effort we make to turn this bad habit into a good one will improve our powers of delivery.

The next thing to do is to arrange our ideas in logical sequence—build up an edifice in the minds of our audience, so that at the end of the lecture they have got a mental picture of the whole construction. Having got so far it is necessary to fix the attention of the audience, otherwise our labour is wasted. Some people possess so much animal magnetism that they have no trouble in this respect: directly they open their mouths every one listens

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and continues to listen as long as they are speaking. Such people require no instruction in the art of speaking, though they may not be very good in the art of imparting useful information. Any failure in that respect, however, is simply due to the fact that they have not got up their subject with sufficient care. Merely to talk and interest the audience is not everything, the amount of knowledge which is left in the minds of the men after the lecture is over is the true criterion of its excellence. Most people have listened to a most interesting discourse delivered by a good speaker and have been full of praise at the end of it, but occasions have occurred when a few of the older hands have recognized that no one has learnt anything, and, in consequence, the efforts of the speaker have been in vain.

There are several ways of recalling the wandering attention of an audience, one of them is the well-known method of the parson, who asks a question which no one but himself is allowed to answer. Another method is by telling an amusing story illustrative of what has just been spoken about, or to make a joke; even a feeble one occasionally serves the purpose. Sometimes the audience themselves assist matters in this respect; for example, a captain was lecturing to his men on night outposts, and when he came to explain the importance of the sentry not going to sleep his eye happened to be fixed unknowingly upon his subaltern, who was seated in the front row peacefully dosing. At the words of his captain the subaltern looked up and caused a general laugh by saying, "No, sir, I was not asleep." Having read the above feeble joke it is possible to realize the truth of what has been stated, and acknowledge that even this somewhat dull discourse is none the worse for an occasional touch of humour.

If we now sum up the requirements of the case we

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find, first, that we must possess sufficient knowledge of our subject; secondly, that we must arrange our ideas in logical sequence; thirdly, that we must speak what we have to say and not read it; fourthly, that we must keep the attention of our audience fixed throughout the lecture.

Anyone who has had no previous experience of expressing his views in public, or who suffers from self-consciousness, will find that the best method is to adopt a system of questions and answers. For example, we will suppose that a captain wishes to lecture to a party of recruits on the subject of outposts, that the recruit does not even know the meanings of the various terms such as sentry, patrol, piquet, support, outposts, &c., and that therefore the lecture must be of an extremely elementary nature. This will suit our purpose very well, because it is always more difficult to prepare an interesting lecture on simple and elementary subjects than it is to deal with more elaborate questions.

We must first explain the situation we wish to discuss, so that every one will thoroughly understand it. Many failures are due to the officer or non-commissioned officer plunging into the details of a subject without preparing the minds of his audience to understand fully what the subject is about. We will now commence with our series of questions and answers.

When two nations declare war against each other what action is taken by the opposing armies?

They usually march towards each other.

Do they meet and fight the first day?

No, they have to march several days before meeting.

What do they do at night?

They halt and the troops go into billets or bivouac, and the men go to sleep.

Is it safe for all the men to go to sleep?

No, because the enemy might surprise them when they

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were asleep, they would not be ready to fight, and they would be defeated.

Must all the men stay awake?

No; because if they did the army would get no rest, and after two days or so they would be completely worn out by marching without sleep, and would be unable to keep awake or to fight when the enemy was met.

How many men must stay awake?

We shall be able to answer that question more definitely later on, meanwhile it is sufficient to say that the army does not take very long to get ready to fight, and small bodies of men posted in good places between the army and the enemy can delay the enemy's advance long enough to enable the main body, who have been asleep, to get ready for battle.

How long does it take for a force to get ready for battle?

That depends greatly upon the size of the force. Suppose the company came in here last night after a long march in the enemy's country and slept in these barracks or bivouacked on the barrack square, with their rifles, ammunition, kit, &c., alongside each man, it would not take the company more than a few minutes to turn out and attack any enemy that came along.

How long would it take the whole battalion to turn out and get ready to fight?

It would take longer because there are several companies to be got into proper formation for fighting. A battalion in battle takes up a wider front than a single company, and consequently the flank men have further to go to get into their proper positions.

The space occupied by a battalion should be compared on the blackboard with that occupied by a company.

How long does it take for a brigade to get ready?

Still longer, because there are four battalions, and

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when the brigade is deployed for battle it naturally takes up much more room than one battalion, and so it goes on to a division and an army. The larger the force the longer it takes to get ready to fight, either when it is halted during a march or when it is assembled in bivouac.

How long in actual time would it take for a company to turn out?

Suppose we were all asleep, and everybody knew exactly what he had to do and where he had to go if the enemy attacked, it would not take us more than five minutes to put on our accoutrements, charge our magazines, and deploy outside the bivouac. It would take a battalion about ten minutes, a brigade fifteen to twenty minutes, and a division, with all its artillery, from three-quarters of an hour to an hour.

Is the force in a good place for fighting directly it has deployed outside the bivouac?

That depends entirely upon the nature of the ground round the bivouac. Some ground might be suitable and other ground might be very bad. For example, a force very often bivouacs in a valley where there is plenty of water to be found for the men and horses, but a valley would not be a good place to commence a fight, because a valley has hills or rising ground on each side of it. If the enemy gets on to that rising ground he will be able to see everybody in the valley and shoot at them, whilst the people in the valley will only be able to see the rifles of the enemy being fired over the crest of the ridge, and can see very little of the men who are using those rifles or of the enemy's troops that are in support or reserve.

Draw on the blackboard a section of a valley showing the troops who have deployed close to their bivouac engaging the enemy who have deployed a firing line along the crest of the opposite ridge.

What are we to do to prevent this?

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It is absolutely necessary for our main body, or the greater part of it, to occupy the ridge in proper fighting formation before our outposts are driven back over it. It is clear, therefore, that more time is required than at first appeared necessary, because the force has not merely to wake up, put on its accoutrements, saddle or harness the horses and deploy close to the bivouac, it has also to march to the ridge, and the time taken over that operation depends upon the distance of the ridge from the bivouac.

Suppose there is no ridge close by, what is to be done then?

The ground must be either perfectly flat, when the enemy would have no advantage over us, or else there must be some hill or commanding ground within rifle or artillery range of the bivouac.

Suppose there is such a hill, how is it to be dealt with?

If it commands the bivouac and the enemy could get guns on to it at night and shell the bivouac as soon as it was light enough to see, we must either move the position of our bivouac or occupy the hill with outposts to prevent the enemy getting hold of it.

How far off can the artillery shell the bivouac?

They can do it easily at a distance of two and a half miles.

Are we to send out outposts two and a half miles away from the bivouac?

That depends a good deal upon the size of the force. If it is a small force it does not take up much room in bivouac and can easily be hidden, and then this distant point could be left unguarded. With a large force, which takes a long time to get ready for battle, the outposts being nearly three miles away would be an advantage, because if the enemy were to attack in strength it would take him a longer time to drive the outposts back three miles than it would a shorter distance.

Is it a good thing always to put the outposts as far away as possible?

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No, because the further the outposts are sent away from the bivouac the greater is the number of men who are required to occupy the outpost position, and who, consequently, are deprived of their night's rest.

Why does it take a larger number of men?

Draw on the blackboard one semi-circle of outposts a mile away from the bivouac and another semi-circle two miles away, and show that if the posts in each case were about the same distance apart, as they would have to be, double the number of posts would be required for the further position and in consequence double the number of men.

What have we learnt so far?

1. That whenever a force halts for any length of time it must be protected by small detachments placed between it and the enemy, so that the main body may have plenty of time to get ready to fight before the enemy is upon them. These detachments being called outposts.

2. That these outposts must not be composed of more men than is absolutely necessary, so that as many men as possible may have a good night's rest.

3. That the outposts must prevent the enemy from occupying the ground near the bivouac which has been selected as most suitable for the main body to hold at the commencement of the fight if the enemy attacks.

4. That the outposts must occupy any ground whence the enemy could fire into the bivouac.

The next question that arises naturally in our minds is how are these outposts arranged?

Before answering this question let us have a clear idea of what we wanted to do.

1. We want to gain information as early as possible regarding the approach of any hostile force.

2. We want to ascertain whether that force only

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consists of a few scouts who could do no harm to the main body or whether it is a serious attack.

3. We want to prevent hostile scouts from gaining any information about the strength or position of our main body.

4. We must delay the advance of a large hostile force until our main body has had time to get ready to attack and defeat it.

How are we going to gain information?

If you have made an appointment to meet a young lady at five o'clock in the afternoon you go to the place arranged, and if she is late, as she generally is, you look in the direction you expect her to come from. The enemy is not so pleasant to meet, but you treat him in exactly the same manner. Men, called sentries, are posted all along the front watching every direction from which the enemy could come so as to give immediate warning of his approach.

How far can a sentry see to his front?

That depends partly upon his eyesight, but chiefly upon the nature of the ground. In almost every kind of country the view is restricted by trees, hills, farm-buildings, villages, hedges, &c. In some places it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a place for a sentry where he can see for more than fifty or a hundred yards. In such a case the enemy can get very close to the sentry without being observed.

How do we get over this difficulty?

We send out small parties of two or three men to scout forward beyond the sentry, and examine any ground the sentry cannot see. These small parties are called patrols.

How often are they sent out?

That depends upon the amount of ground in front which the sentry cannot see. If there is a great deal of such ground the patrols would have to go out at least once every two hours by day, and even more frequently at

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night. As a rule, however, by day ground which cannot be seen by one sentry can be watched by another sentry on the flank of the first.

How is this managed at night when the sentry can only see a short distance in front of him?

Although a sentry cannot see far at night it is equally difficult for the enemy in large bodies to move across country in the dark, and consequently when the country is intersected by woods, hedges, streams, &c., the enemy are compelled to keep to the roads and tracks. If sentries are placed well forward on these roads they can give sufficient warning of the enemy's approach. When it is possible for the enemy to move off the roads or tracks it is essential that a frequent system of patrolling should be maintained.

How are we going to prevent the enemy's scouts from getting past our sentries and ascertaining the position and strength of the main body?

The scout in war does not walk through sentry lines in the same bold manner that he adopts in peace operations. Nevertheless there is always a possibility that stray scouts may get through the outposts by night. Even if they do it is not easy for them to get any definite information as to the strength of the main body, and they cannot do the main body any harm; furthermore, they must get back again before daylight or they are almost certain to be captured. It would deprive too many men of their night's rest to place sentries so close together as to render it impossible for a very daring hostile scout to get through, and it is a risk which must be accepted.

How are the sentries to ascertain whether the enemy consists of a few men, who could not hurt the main body, or a large force?

If there are only a few men they will be likely to do their best to avoid the sentry—they are out to get

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information not to drive in the outposts. It will be seen later, however, when we discuss the question of delaying the enemy if he advances in strength, that the resistance which must be offered by the outposts will disclose the strength of the enemy.

How are we going to delay the enemy?

The sentry cannot stop or even delay a large hostile force for more than a minute or two, because they can get round his flanks and cut off his retreat. In order to delay the enemy we require a stronger force, called a piquet, which is posted somewhere in rear of the sentry, and which can bring a heavy fire to bear on the enemy if he advances and compel him to deploy a much larger force than the piquet. This will take some time, and it will take still longer for this hostile force to gain superiority of fire over the piquet, or to rush it successfully with the bayonet. It will take the enemy still longer to work round the flanks of the piquet, especially at night, and endeavour to cut off its line of retreat.

What sort of place should we choose for posting the piquet?

Some locality where there is a good field of fire in the direction from which the enemy is most likely to advance, and where there is no other place close by, especially on a flank, which commands the ground occupied by the piquet, and which the enemy could occupy and thence fire into the piquet.

Would such a position be suitable by night as well as by day?

The field of fire by night is always very restricted, because the men cannot see, so that the importance of commanding ground is not so great. In fact, a better fire position can frequently be selected on low ground looking up over the crest of a rising slope in front, with the sky as a background. On the darkest nights figures moving

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over the sky-line can be observed at a considerable distance, whereas, if the position selected is on the top of a hill the only view is into a valley where everything is shrouded in pitch darkness.

If the suitability of a position by day does not agree with that by night will it be necessary to change the position of the piquet?

Yes; and there is another reason why it is desirable to change the position of the piquet by night. The enemy may have been able to discover its position during daylight and he may have made plans to attack it during the night. If, when he advances, he finds that the position of the piquets has been changed it will come as a surprise to him and his plans will be upset.

When changing the position of the piquet to a locality suitable for outposts by night is it usual to draw it back or establish it further forwards?

It is best to send it further forward for two reasons. First, the enemy will come across it before he expected to meet with any opposition; and, secondly, the sentry is usually much further away from the piquet by day than he is by night. He is generally on high ground by day where he can get a good view, but this is not a good place for observation by night, because he has no sky-line to look over. It would be a mistake to give up this ground to the enemy, and consequently the sentry is pushed still further forward; which means that the piquet must also be moved forward so as to close up to the sentry.

Are the piquets and sentries always moved forward at night?

No, it depends a great deal upon the ground. If the country is very close and it is practically impossible for large forces of the enemy to move off the roads or tracks, or if there is a river in front of the piquet, its flanks are

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then secured by the impassable nature of the country, and it is only necessary to arrange for a heavy fire towards the only approach the enemy can select, namely, the track through the close country or the bridge across the river.

Is it possible to lay down any exact rules as to the selection of the position for a piquet or for a sentry?

No, because the ground is never the same, and a position which is suitable in one locality is quite unsuitable in another. We shall see, however, when we come to study the details of sentry and piquet work that there are a few general rules or principles which can be applied with some certainty in definite types of country which we are likely to meet, and these principles will be of great use to us when we are deciding what to do.

How long is the piquet to delay the enemy?

As already stated that depends upon the size of our force and the distance it is from its fighting position outside the bivouac. In any case the piquet must put up a very serious resistance, and be prepared even to sacrifice itself, if it is necessary, for the safety of the whole force. For this reason piquets are very carefully entrenched, obstacles are made in front, and bushes, trees and hedges which interfere with the field of fire are cut down.

Draw on the blackboard a sketch of a piquet in position with artificial obstacles placed in front of it, and a few natural obstacles to view and fire removed; the material obtained from the latter being utilized for the former.

How are the companies arranged on the ground so as to provide these piquets?

It is usual to allot a certain front of ground to one company, with other companies to its flanks until the whole outpost position is carefully guarded. These companies are called outpost companies. Sometimes, owing to the nature of the country in front, one piquet

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is sufficient for each outpost company, sometimes two are necessary, and sometimes three. We will take an example of each.

Draw on the blackboard a flank outpost company on open ground with a spur on the left front, a knoll in the centre, and a small wood on the right front. Here three piquets might be required, one on each of the features mentioned above. Opposite No. 2 outpost company the country is enclosed with two tracks leading from the direction of the enemy, and joining each other behind the outpost position. In this case two piquets would, probably, be sufficient. Opposite No. 3 outpost company there is a river which runs in from the direction of the enemy to the flank of No. 2 outpost company, and then bends across the front of No. 3 outpost company. This river has only one bridge across it in the neighbourhood of the outpost position, and this bridge carries the main road which runs into the position from the direction of the enemy. Here one piquet on, or near, the main road would be sufficient, because it guards the only approach by which the enemy could advance against No. 3 outpost company.

These can only be taken as a general type, because the exact number of piquets could not be decided without inspecting the ground.

If one outpost company has to find three piquets, and another outpost company only one piquet, will not the strength of the piquets vary considerably?

Each piquet generally consists of one section. The officer commanding a company finding three piquets would endeavour to make each piquet even smaller than one section, so as to retain in his hand a strong support which could reinforce any particular piquet which is being heavily attacked. The company which is furnishing only one piquet will be placed

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at some very important locality, which the enemy is very likely to attack.

In such a case would any difference be made at night?

It is better, if possible, at night to avoid any movement of reinforcements, because confusion is likely to result. The reinforcements come up in the dark, they may not know exactly where to go to, and they may arrive too late to prevent the piquet from being driven back.

What is the best plan to adopt at night when there is only one piquet?

It is better to place the whole company in the spot selected for the piquet, so as to avoid any movement when the enemy attacks.

Sufficient has been written to show the method of preparing a lecture on the question and answer principle. We started with the intention of giving the recruit a general knowledge of outpost work, and some definite instruction as regards the meaning of the words sentry, patrol, piquet, support, and outposts. We have built up an edifice before his eyes, each detail following in logical succession that which has gone before it. It is easy for the recruit to understand and remember all that he has heard, when it is presented to him in this manner, and it is easy to deliver a lecture prepared in this way. The officer writes down the questions and answers, and although he should never read them out, he can easily put them into his own words and use his notes purely for reference. He varies the possible monotony of the lecture by a pause between each answer and the question which follows it, and during this pause he can glance at his notes for the next question and its answer.

He can commence each question with some such remark as one of the following.

What is the next question we ought to ask ourselves?

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If that is the case, we want to know what will happen if, &c.

Having ascertained the meaning of the word patrol, and having realized what a patrol is used for, we will now consider, &c.

Similar remarks will readily occur to the officer who is lecturing. Finally, we should always sum up the lessons of the lecture. This might be done as regards the example given above in the following words.

The object of the lecture was to give you some instruction in the meaning of the words outposts, outpost companies, supports, piquets, patrols and sentries, and to show you the object of these various detachments, and the work they have to perform. As regards outposts generally, we now know that any force which is halted must send out detachments towards the enemy, to prevent him from taking our main body by surprise, and thus enable the main body to have an undisturbed night's rest.

These outposts are required to delay the enemy if he advances in strength, so that the main body have time to get ready to fight. The main body requires time for two purposes. One to turn out of their billets or bivouacs and fall in, and the other to reach the best fighting position in the neighbourhood. This position may be close to the bivouac or some distance away; in the second case more delay is required than in the first.

We have found that the sentries watch for the enemy, the patrols examine ground which the sentries cannot see, and the piquets and supports fight and delay the enemy. We have considered how the nature of the country affects the establishment of outposts, and how in close country fewer men are required than in open country. Our minds are now prepared to study in detail the duties of these various detachments on different

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types of ground, and when any of the names that we have been using to-day crop up during future instruction we shall all know what they mean, and possess a good general knowledge of the subject.

Such a summary should include all the important lessons that have been taught during the lecture, so as to impress them on the minds of the men.

Any subject connected with training can be dealt with by this system of questions and answers, taking care to commence in each case with the object of the particular operation it is intended to teach, and continue with the details arranged in logical sequence. What are we aiming at? What is the first step? Why? Why not do something else? Is the action recommended of universal application, or does it depend upon the ground or the situation? If so, give types of ground and types of situations which are most commonly met with in war. Never leave a question with a vague solution—always find an answer which will at least suit one type of ground or one type of situation. Never avoid a question; if it occurs to us it will occur to our audience, if we cannot find the answer ourselves we must ask some one else. Some questions are most difficult to answer, but careful thought and division of the question into several parts will usually produce a satisfactory reply. When preparing the answers to the questions keep them as short as possible: it is better to increase the number of questions rather than to lengthen the answer to one. Long answers are difficult to pick up from notes and difficult for the audience to follow.

The subjects dealt with in subsequent chapters are arranged so that the information they contain can readily be turned into questions and answers if required for lecturing purposes, and every effort has been made to present the details in logical sequence.

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CHAPTER IV

THE ART OF INSTRUCTION ON THE GROUND

THE keynote of the successful tactical training of companies on the ground is the combination of demonstration and verbal instruction. Company training is carried out in the early spring, when the weather is frequently inclement and long explanations on the ground are out of place, because they only weary the men, who want to be moving about to keep warm. The theoretical part of the work should have been explained to the men indoors during the previous afternoon, and the work on the ground should be devoted to teaching the men how to apply the lessons which they had learned from the lecture.

The system of demonstration is very simple, it requires very little imagination on the part of officers or men, it is eminently practical, and its value has been proved by centuries of experience in other trades. The carpenter or bootmaker shows the apprentice how to hold his tools and how to use them. The embryo surgeon watches the skilful operator many times before he sticks his own knife into a patient. The airman who is learning to fly has to accompany and watch the expert during many flights before he is allowed to touch the levers, and even then the movements of his hands are guided by the instructor, until he has become sufficiently expert to manage the machine by himself. In fact there is no trade which

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demands the close combination of the brain and the limbs that is not best taught by demonstration.

This system has the further advantage of emulation, because when we are watching another man or squad carrying out some exercise, either in the gymnasium or in the field, we soon learn to recognize a mistake when it is made, we think we could do better, and when it comes to our turn we at least endeavour to avoid the particular mistakes we have seen. If, while we are looking on, there is an expert with us, who points out what is wrong, why it is wrong, and what should have been done, we make very rapid progress in our training. Another great advantage is that the men, to a great extent, teach themselves, mistakes which are made are at once brought home to them, and their interest throughout is maintained.

The most important point in connection with company training on the ground is to realize ourselves, and make every one under our command realize, that there are two disturbing influences in all military operations which prevent us from being able to establish any fixed rules, and are in reality the only bar to such rules. These influences are the ever-varying nature of the ground, and of the immediate situation. There is some limit to the situations, though they are many, but there is practically no limit as regards the variations of the ground.

The most that we can do during company training is to vary the situation and the ground as frequently as possible, and to realize that the situation does not change merely as regards attack as compared with defence or with the service of security, but that it varies constantly during each of these operations. For example, the situation of a company in attack, when forming part of the leading troops of an advanced guard, is quite different and requires different handling, and different action on the part of the men to that of a company taking part in a

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great attack upon an entrenched position. In the first case speed in the advance and vigour in the attack are the dominating influences of the situation, so that the enemy's troops, who have only just been met, may be driven back before they have time to establish themselves in the locality which they have reached and before their reinforcements arrive. Long preparation, careful reconnaissance, elaborate plans of attack which take a long time to execute, are out of place. In the second case the attack is far more deliberate, plenty of time is available to explain the plan of operations to all ranks, and the main object at first is to get the company forward as rapidly as possible to a position where they can use their rifles with effect, and gain superiority of fire, to enable them to make a further advance in order to reach a position close up to the enemy whence they can assault him with the bayonet.

As regards the ground we have large and extensive features to deal with, such as hills, woods, open valleys, cornfields, scrub, marshy ground, villages, rivers, &c., every one of which demands some modification in our general system of operations, and which requires recognition by the officers commanding companies and sections. We have also small features like hedges, banks, slight undulations of ground, bushes, small streams, bridges, &c., which demand attention and knowledge on the part of individual men, as well as on that of the officers and non-commissioned officers.

Similarly on the defence the situation of an outpost company guarding some important approach from the direction of the enemy, with both its flanks liable to be turned or attacked, is quite different to that of a company taking part in the defence of an extended position, with other companies right and left of it, and supports close at hand ready to make good any casualties which may

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occur, yet in both cases the company is acting purely on the defensive. The variations of the ground, which rule the selection of the fire position on the defence, are so numerous that at first sight it appears to be almost impossible to arrive at any definite conclusions.

By taking types of situations and types of ground, and by using that valuable quality called common sense, we can find, however, some main roads through this confused maze, which enable us to traverse the by-paths that we encounter without any fear of going far out of our way towards the correct solution of any problem which we may be called upon to deal with in war. It appears to be desirable, therefore, when engaged in training our companies in the field, to lay the greatest stress on the variations of the ground, which should come first; variations of the situation as regards any one particular operation, such as the attack, coming second; and variations as regards tactics, namely attack, defence, and the service of security, coming third.

We are not engaged in the solution of tactical problems when we are conducting the collective training of our company, so that elaborate schemes are quite out of place. The soldier has nothing to do with such schemes in war; all we have to teach him in the way of tactical training is what to do with his brain, his body and his weapons when he is engaged in the attack, in the defence, or in the service of security. If the officer commanding a company commences his collective training with the general scheme in his head that he is going to teach the company attack, defence, advanced rear and flank guards, protection of convoys (quite a favourite subject), outposts, &c., and that the ground will, no doubt, affect these operations; he will soon reach the limit of his tactical variations, and of his powers of producing a useful day's work, without many repetitions. If, on the other hand,

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he starts with the idea of teaching the men how the variations of the ground and of the situation affect their action in the attack, how they affect them in the defence, and how in the service of security, he will never reach the limit of his powers of instruction, because every bit of ground has to be treated differently. Some people think that if the company does the attack one day it must do something different the next. Others go so far as to say that part of one day's work should be devoted to one subject and part to another. When training is conducted on the demonstration system there is no fear of the men getting tired of one of these subjects, which is the reason given for constant change, whilst there are good reasons why the company should be thoroughly trained in one of them, such as the attack, before it is taught another, such as the defence. We do not arrange our schools of instruction so that officers or non-commissioned officers can do a couple of hours at the school of musketry, then two hours at the school of signalling, and finally two more at the school of cookery, because every one knows that they are totally different subjects. Although attack, defence, and the service of security do not vary to such a great extent as the subjects taught in these schools, they are quite different subjects, dominated by different principles, and we are likely to produce confusion in the minds of young soldiers if we mix them up too much.

Let us take the example of the company commander who prefers teaching his men the various tactical operations deseribed above, with the ground as a secondary consideration, and let us suppose that he intends to practise the attack. He will, no doubt, prepare a very good scheme, and, since tactics is the dominating idea in his mind, he will probably arrange for a counterstroke, or some complete change in the situation during the day's

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work, with the object of making things more interesting for the men. We will suppose that he has not visited the area allotted to him for the day's work, with reference to this particular scheme, but he knows every stone on it, and considers that it is fairly suitable for his requirements.

When the company arrives on the ground he explains to his men what he is going to do, and commences his attack. He finds, after all, that the ground is not very suited to his purpose, and that the company must advance several hundred yards before they can see any part of the enemy's position. They then emerge out of a wood or reach a hill within six hundred yards of the men with pole targets who have been posted to represent the enemy. The attack proper now commences, the first part having been a country ramble. A thin firing line is deployed and advances, it is gradually reinforced, and the attack is conducted as though it had commenced twelve hundred yards from the enemy's position. A fire position is established, with the object of gaining superiority of fire over the defence, in a locality which could not possibly have been reached unless fire superiority had already been obtained further back, and the assault is delivered or the situation changed according to the programme which has been prepared for the day. The company then goes home, having spent part of the morning in advancing, in attack formation, over ground which was not exposed to the enemy's fire, and the remainder in carrying out an unreal attack over a very small piece of ground.

The next day the captain says, "We did the attack yesterday; we will do the defence to-day," thus ringing the changes on different tactical operations, instead of keeping to one type, and varying the ground and the situation for that type.

Let us now take an example of a day's work conducted

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on the principle of demonstration, the dominating idea being to teach the men how the variations of ground affect one tactical operation. We will suppose that the captain wishes to train his company in that portion of the attack commeneing in the locality where the soldier can first use his rifle, and terminating in the locality where no further advance is possible until superiority of fire has been obtained, frequently, but quite wrongly, called the final fire position.

We will suppose that the captain has visited beforehand the area which has been allotted to him for the day's training, that he has found the ground suitable for practising this particular operation, and that he has selected a position for his skeleton force where they can see nearly the whole of the ground over which the company will attack, and where their pole targets can be seen by the company.

This operation should commence about twelve hundred yards from the enemy's position, which latter should be pointed out to the company, together with the direction to be taken by the company and the particular part of the enemy's position it is intended to assault.

We can now commence the demonstration. The captain would explain to the men that the company is taking part in a big attack, and that there are many imaginary companies to the right and left of it, with the reserve companies of the battalion in rear, and probably a second and third line behind them. He would inform the company that they had been advancing, so far, over ground which was or was not, according to the actual country, exposed to hostile artillery fire the same as they did the other day, and that now the company has come under hostile infantry as well as hostile artillery fire, and must in consequence change its methods of advance. He will next call to their minds the main points which they have already been taught in the lecture room

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The immediate object of the company is to get forward, without expending more ammunition than is absolutely necessary, to a position close enough to the enemy to enable the men to use their rifles with such deadly effect that they can gain superiority of fire over the defence. The first question to ask is whether the place the company has arrived at is sufficiently close for this purpose? The answer is, certainly not. Is that next ridge just in front of us close enough? No, it is not; it is at least a thousand yards from the enemy's position.

What are the main points we must pay attention to during this advance?

1. We must halt in good fire positions where we can see and fire at the enemy, and where he cannot see us very clearly.

2. We must advance very rapidly over any open ground which is exposed to the enemy's shrapnel or rifle bullets.

3. We must find halting-places, if possible under cover, or in the best cover available, so as to avoid making our forward rushes so long that the men will get worn out, and begin to straggle long before they get close enough to the enemy to use their rifles with deadly effect.

4. We must use our scouts for the selection of a fire position in front whenever it is possible to do so.

These points will have been explained already to the men in a lecture, and this short summary will focus their minds upon the action which must be taken by section commanders and by individual men.

We now take one section and the remainder of the company look on. The section commander is told that directly he advanees his section will eome under hostile artillery and infantry fire, and that the section is to advance to what he considers to be the first fire position available, excluding the one he is already deployed on.

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We will suppose that there is a gentle slope down and a gentle slope up to the next ridge or undulation of ground, and that there are no obstructions to view except those afforded by the ground itself. The section now advances, and the captain remains with the rest of the company, pointing out good points and also mistakes, and asking the men questions, such as:

Should the whole of the section go forward in extended order at once, or would it have been better for small extended groups to go forward in succession?

The enemy's infantry fire at this distance will not be very deadly, the section is well extended, it would take longer to get forward to the next fire position by successive groups than if the whole section moved at once, and we want to get forward at this stage of the proceedings as rapidly as possible, because the longer we take over it the longer the men will be exposed to fire, and consequently the greater the number of casualties.

Why did the section advance at the double when moving down the slope?

To get over the exposed ground as quickly as possible.

Why did they begin to walk just before reaching the foot of the slope?

Because they got into dead ground and were covered from the enemy's fire by the ridge in front.

Ought the section to have halted when it reached this cover so as to give the men a rest?

No, it is sufficient to walk because the men have only run about seventy yards down hill.

Why did a scout run on ahead directly the section began to walk?

Because he can creep up to the crest of the ridge and lie down in exactly the spot which is the best fire position; namely, where he can just see to fire over the crest at the enemy and where the enemy cannot see him.

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What is the object of doing that?

All the men in the section might not stop at the best fire position, and in the hurry of the moment the section commander might also fail to do so, but if the scout goes forward and lies down the whole section knows that they must not go beyond the scout. Individual men who, owing to the slight undulations of ground, may not be able to fire when they halt in line with the scout can creep up until they can see. Others who, for the same reason as regards the ground, find that if they go as far as the scout they will be unduly exposed to fire will halt before they get in line with him.

Is it necessary for another section to provide covering fire during the advance of this section?

No, the enemy's infantry fire is not very effective at this range, and it is very important to husband our ammunition for the later stages of the attack.

Having asked any other questions suggested by the situation or the ground, the captain will then take his company forward over the same ground as that traversed by the section, he will halt at the place where the section changed its pace from a rush to a walk, so that the men can see for themselves that cover from fire has been reached, and he will then move the company forward and tell them to halt and lie down in what each man considers to be the best fire position, not necessarily adopting the same position as that chosen by the leading section. The section commanders will then go along their sections and point out any mistakes.

The original section will now join the company and another section will be deployed in the fire position, the officer or non-commissioned officer in command being told to advance to the next fire position. As we are now some 1000 yards from the enemy's position the question will again arise as to whether covering fire is necessary.

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If the enemy's rifle fire is very heavy and accurate it might be necessary, but it should be avoided if possible, on account of the expenditure of ammunition.

We will suppose that the ground falls gently towards the enemy and is very exposed to view for about 300 yards, and half this distance away there is a low bank running parallel to the front of the attack and with a small clump of three or four trees on the bank directly in front of the section. Four hundred yards away is the bottom of the valley covered with bushes and shrub. On the far side the ground rises with small undulations and low foot hills to the high ground occupied by the enemy.

There appears to be no marked fire position which will afford any cover except the bank 150 yards away. The second section advances in the same manner as before and the captain with the commanders of the remaining sections will continue to ask questions and point out what has been done right or wrong by the leading section. The first question which will arise is whether the section can reach the fire position offered by the bank in one rush, and secondly whether the bank is a good fire position or not. A former question will again crop up as to whether the whole section should go forward at once or whether the advance should be made by groups.

A hundred and fifty yards is a long way to advance without a halt, and if a halt is made on such exposed ground fire must be opened. Probably three advances, each of about fifty yards would be made, covering fire being provided by the supports who will be occupying the fire position which the leading section has just left. This covering fire would not endanger the leading section, as it would be delivered from just behind the crest and the leading section would be over the crest and out of sight and therefore out of fire from the section in rear.

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The selection of a fire position during this advance would depend upon very minute folds of the ground, or very low bushes, grass, &c., which might give a certain amount of cover from view, and therefore make it difficult for the enemy to aim or range accurately. We will suppose that the leading section has halted to fire about fifty yards in front, the remaining sections, in turn, should then be taken forward, examining the ground very carefully as they go, and each section commander asked to halt his section in what he considers to be the best place.

The possibility of using a scout to select a fire position would be considered, and a fire position selected by one section would be compared with that selected by another.

The third section would then lead during the advance to the next fire position, and so on with the fourth section, if necessary, until the bank was reached. The bank will afford a good deal of material for discussion. Is it a good fire position or is it not, should it be occupied as such or should it be avoided altogether?

If we ask an artillery officer his opinion about the matter, he will tell us that by means of the clump of trees the defender's artillery will be able to range with absolute accuracy on that bank. The direction of the bank is parallel to their front, and therefore they can fire at any part of it for some distance right and left of the clump without materially altering their range, and if any infantry occupy the bank they can bring a very deadly fire to bear against them.

There appears to be no doubt, from an artillery point of view, that our section should avoid occupying it and get out of its neighbourhood as rapidly as possible.

There is another drawback as regards the bank: it is some 850 yards from the enemy's position and may be

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expected to be under an effective rifle fire. It is no doubt a good mark for the enemy, and, now we come to the crux of the whole matter, his artillery and infantry fire might not do us much damage so long as we remain behind the bank, but they might make it very unpleasant for us directly we try to leave this cover and advance further.

Before finally deciding what to do we must consider human nature, which is entirely in favour of halting behind the bank, and if allowed to remain there long will be opposed to leaving it. We cannot hope to gain superiority of fire over the enemy at a range of 850 yards, so that a long halt at the bank is out of the question. But it appears to be an extraordinary thing, when we are searching everywhere for cover, that we should be doubtful about occupying such good cover when we find it.

If we decide not to occupy it, the logical conclusion is that, when preparing a position for defence, we should construct a good fire position for the attack some 850 yards away, which is the last thing we should think of doing.

There is no doubt about it, that with badly-trained troops such a fire position would be liable to become a snare, and that if they once occupied it, there would be great difficulty in getting them forward again, and probably the attack would be brought to a standstill at a critical time.

The answer appears to be found in the simple solution of good training. We must teach our men that when they get into such positions they must use the cover afforded, but for no longer than any other fire position, and that they must get into the habit in peace of looking upon such localities with suspicion, and with the knowledge that they are not suitable for lengthy occupation in war if the battle is to be won.

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We now come to a still more difficult question of training, namely, how far can the company get forward from the bank without being compelled to stop in order to gain superiority of fire over the defence? In war we want to get as close as possible; the moral effect on the defence is greater, our fire is more effective, and we are likely to gain our object more rapidly. In peace there is no fire to stop us, and we move forward to ridiculous positions which we could not possibly reach in war without first gaining superiority of fire. The result of this is that we try to do the same thing when first we go to war, and we are stopped, probably much further back than we should have been if we had studied the question in peace.

Even on the most open ground we must get to within 600 yards of the enemy, and if the ground affords any cover in front the exposed space must be rushed and the more forward position gained. Having pointed out this difficulty to the company during the previous lecture, and reminded them of it on the ground, we can now extend the whole company and move forward from the bank, using covering fire and letting each section commander decide how far he can get to the front after a series of rushes, the company acting as a whole.

The captain can then go down the line and discuss with each section the position it has reached. Whilst he is doing this, the remaining sections can be trained in fire direction and control, which should be carefully watched and criticized by the section commanders. One section, owing to the nature of the ground in front of it, can get forward further than other sections, and this should be brought home to each section, so as to avoid the possibility of playing the game of follow my leader, and one section halting merely because another has halted.

If there is still time available, and the ground is suitable,

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the company can be moved to a flank to choose a similar fire position where the ground is more favourable to an advance, and where the company could get within 300 yards of the enemy, or even less, before it would be absolutely necessary to stop in order to gain superiority of fire.

If there is still time available, and the ground is suitable, the whole operation can be carried out in the opposite direction or in some other direction, and the sections can thus be trained to appreciate that fire positions which are good in one place are bad in another. A more thorough investigation of fire positions which will suggest subjects for discussion on the ground will be found in Chapter VIII, dealing with this stage of the attack.

Demonstrations in defence can be carried out in a similar manner, the captain explaining to the company the general line of defence to be taken up, the portion allotted to the company, and the probable direction of the enemy's attack.

The co-operation of the artillery and infantry will have been pointed out in the previous lecture: how some part of the enemy's advance will be dealt with by artillery alone, some part by both artillery and infantry, and some part by infantry alone.

This can now be pointed out to the men on the ground. Having considered the assistance provided by the artillery, the next point to decide upon is the exact position of the fire trench. The best way to proceed is to allot a certain portion of the front occupied by the company to each section and to let the section commanders take charge of the operations. The section commander can direct one of his fire groups to select a position for the trench, and that group can lie down there. The remaining groups will then select a position in turn. If two groups select the same they can lie down together. The section commander will then fall in his section, and make them lie

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down in the most retired position chosen; he will ask the group commander why the group chose that locality in preference to any other, why they did not go ten yards further forward or ten yards further back; and he will explain to the whole section the advantages and disadvantages of selecting this locality. He will then move the whole section forward to the next position chosen by another group and deal with that locality. Finally, he will select the position he thinks the best, giving his reasons why he has decided upon it, and place the whole section on it. When all the sections have decided upon their line of defence, the captain will move the whole company in turn from the ground occupied by one section to that occupied by another, asking the section commander in each case to explain why the position was chosen in preference to any other.

He will give his decision as regards each section, and he will finally arrange for the position to be occupied by the whole company. One section, for some good reason, may have chosen a place which it would not be safe to occupy, owing to the fire of another section on the flank. Another section may have chosen a place which was very good as regards the field of fire in a direction which was already adequately defended by another section, but which had a bad field of fire over ground which no other section could fire upon. The company commander would adjust all these matters, and in the end one or more sections might not be placed in the best position as regards their own particular front, but in the best as regards the whole company.

Having decided upon the exact site of the trenches and the general distribution of fire, the next matter to consider is the amount of clearing that is necessary, and the position and nature of any obstacles which may be required. Each section commander having been allotted

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a definite fire zone, ean point out to his section what clearance is necessary; he can then ask each group, as before, to choose the position for the obstacle. The company commander can then take the whole company to the position occupied by each section and tell the section commander to explain what ground they propose to clear, where they propose to place their obstacle, the material available for its construction, and in every case the reason why the decision has been arrived at. If digging is permitted, the trenches will now be constructed, and care will be taken that they are actually finished. It is far better to work overtime than to construct trenches which would be of little use in war and could not be properly defended. It is the exception rather than the rule to see trenches properly finished, fit for occupation. and capable of resisting a heavy attack. If the trenches cannot be dug the company can be taken to another part of the same position, where the ground in front is totally different, and the exercise can be repeated, the section and company commanders pointing out why a fire trench which was well sited in the first case would be badly sited if a similar position was selected in the second case.

Many othor points which would come up for discussion according to the nature of the ground in front, are dealt witl in Chapters XIV to XVII, "The Company in Defence."

We can now turn to the method of training the company in outpost duty, making use of the same system of demonstration. Having pointed out to the company the locality where the main body is bivouacked, the fighting position which the main body will occupy in case a heavy attack is made against the outposts, and the general line of the outposts, the company commander will indicate on the ground the extent of front which is to be guarded by his outpost company, stating whether imaginary outpost companies continue the position on one or both flanks

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He will point out the possible avenues of approach from the direction of the enemy to that portion of the position to be occupied by the company, and state from which direction the enemy is most likely to advance and why.

The first point to decide is the number of piquets and their exact position. In war this would always be done by the company commander, but if it is desired to give the junior officers of the company some instruction in this important detail, they should be sent out before the company arrives on the ground to reconnoitre the position and make their decisions. It is, however, waste of time and unnecessary to ask section or group commanders to take men over the ground to discuss the number of piquets required. All the men want to know is why three piquets were necessary instead of two or one, and why the position chosen for each piquet was better than any other. The knowledge that no better position is available will enable them to offer a strenuous resistance, even under adverse circumstances. The exact siteing of the trenches for the piquet, the construction of obstacles, and the clearance of the foreground, can be carried out by the section commanders in the same manner as has been suggested for the defence, each group in the section working out the problem independently.

These details having been settled, the positions selected by each group discussed, and a definite site selected, the next question to decide is the number and position of the sentries. This is essentially work for the group commander and his men, and each group should be directed to go out independently, look at the ground, consider the possible lines of approach open to the enemy towards that part of the outpost position for which the piquet is responsible, and then come back and give the section commander the decisions they have arrived at.

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The section commander would then take each scheme in turn, visit with the whole section each position selected by the various groups for the sentry, and decide finally what it would be best to do, giving, as usual, his reasons.

Having decided upon the positions of the sentries, and their line of retreat, so as not to mask the fire of the piquet, the next matter to consider would be the number of patrols that are required, and the particular areas of ground that must be examined by them periodically. The necessary trenches, obstacles, &c., would then be constructed.

Finally, the whole company should be assembled, marched to the position chosen for each piquet, and the reasons for selecting the position explained by the company commander. The company should then be told off as an outpost company, and divided into piquets, supports, if any, and the necessary sentries over arms, patrols, &c. Each piquet will be told off with its sentry groups, patrols, &c., all these various details being kept apart so that any one of them will not disturb the others when required to go out on duty at night.

If there is still time available each piquet commander can reconnoitre the ground for a suitable position for his piquet by night, take the piquet there, explain why the change of position is desirable, and direct the group commanders with their groups to select positions for the sentries, following the same procedure as by day.

Although it is quite correct to select positions for night outposts during daylight, when possible, they should never be definitely occupied by the company before dark, when the forward movement could not be observed by the enemy. To practise night outposts by day is bad instruction, piquets and sentries are placed in positions which appear ridiculous to the ordinary mind, and the men get

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confused ideas on the subject. When it is desired to practise day and night outposts as an advanced exercise it is advisable to commence work in the afternoon, establish the day outposts, reconnoitre for the night outposts, make the change after dark, and construct the necessary trenches, obstacles, &c., for the piquet after dark.

It is, however, extremely important that the patrols should get to know their way about the country in front during daylight, when possible, so that they will have some practice in recognizing land marks by night.

It frequently occurs, when training the company in outpost duties, that long periods elapse during which the piquet is doing nothing. These opportunities should be taken to instruct the men in their duties when ordered to patrol to the front, the same system of demonstration being employed. The officer commanding the piquet can select three men, point out certain ground in front which the sentries cannot see and which must be examined by a patrol, and proceed to instruct the whole piquet in the best manner of carrying out this work. We will suppose that the patrol is working by day and that the ground to be visited is behind a small hill some 500 yards in front of the sentry. The officer commanding the piquet will then explain to the men that the first object of the patrol is to reach the ground to be examined without being seen by any hostile scouts which may be moving about in front. Before proceeding further it is necessary for the patrol to decide upon the best line of advance. The various lines of advance will be discussed and the patrol asked to decide which they would select. Three other men can then be asked to give their opinion, and so on until all the men of the piquet have expressed their views. The officer commanding the piquet will then state which he considers the best line and give his reasons.

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The next matter to decide is the method of advance to be adopted by the patrol. Are the three men to march past the sentry in one body and walk straight over the hill in front? If they do this there may a hostile patrol hiding just behind the crest, watching the movements of our patrol, and directly the latter reach the hill they will be covered by the rifles of the hostile patrol at a few yards' range and will be captured or shot.

If the patrol is not to advance in one body how is it to act? There is plenty of time available, so that there are no objections to deliberate methods. The patrol should advance from cover to cover with one man always going forward protected by the rifles of the remaining two men who have halted in a good position to fire on any enemy that can fire on the leading man. The leading man having reached the cover in front will signal back all clear, and the two men in rear will join him. They will then make their next advance in a similar manner.

By looking at the hill the patrol can make a good guess at the locality which a hostile scout would select if he was on the hill. It would be a place where he could get a good view towards our outpost line, and where he could not be seen himself from the outpost line. If the hill was quite bare with nothing but grass on it and a flat round top, the best place for the enemy's scout would be exactly on the top just behind the crest. In such a position he could not be seen by any sentry to the right or left of our piquet. For example, if the hostile scout chose a place on the side of the bare slope of the hill and looked over the crest line he would not be seen by our sentry, but he might be seen by another one on the flank.

The object of our patrol would be to approach the hill, not direct from the piquet, but either from the left

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or right of the hill and thus come on the flank of the enemy's patrol if he was there.

The whole piquet can then be taken out to the front and follow the movements of the patrol from cover to cover until the hill is reached.

The next step will be to ascertain if there is any one on the top of the hill. If the hill is perfectly bare with a somewhat convex slope, it would be best for the three men to extend to about twenty yards interval and move forward together, prepared to drop on the first sign of the enemy, so that they can creep up and open fire on him without exposing themselves. Three men with magazine rifles, extended in this manner, opposed to a hostile patrol collected in one party, should be able to deal with the latter without much difficulty. Their fire would be converging, and coming from different directions would confuse the hostile patrol, especially if the advance was made from a flank. The men of the patrol when creeping up the hill should avoid exposing themselves in the direction of the ground behind the hill, if possible, because they want to examine that ground later on, and if seen by the enemy they might fall into an ambuscade. If it is impossible to avoid being seen from the ground beyond it would be best for the patrol to retire as though they were going back to the outposts, and then move round the flank of the hill and advance to the ground beyond from an unexpected direction. All this would be considered by the officer commanding the piquet, together with many other points brought to notice in Chapter XXI, "The training of company scouts and patrols."

Sufficient has been said to explain how this system of demonstration can be worked in connection with any class of operation in the field. It is certainly slow, and takes a long time, but no one is ever idle and every one is constantly learning something fresh, for the simple reason

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that, although one may know every detail of the subject, the ground constantly differs and requires to be dealt with in a common-sense and skilful manner. The men are interested throughout, and one morning spent on this kind of work is worth several days of practice in the ordinary manner.

It should be remembered that this system of demonstration is only required to teach the men their work; when they have once learnt it and thoroughly understand the necessary details they must be practised in it, the company or section commander indicating what has been well done, what has been badly done, and what requires improvement.

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CHAPTER V

THE PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR COMPANY TRAINING

The Regulations lay stress on the importance of progressive training, which means that we are to begin at small and elementary details and gradually work forward until we can put the whole puzzle together and produce the finished article. Unless we take great pains with our programme of work we shall fail to make our training really progressive, because we shall forget certain items and then put them in in the wrong place, and be working throughout in a confusing and haphazard manner. In most armies, where the recruits all join the colours on a definite date each year, it is easy to adopt a system of progressive training. In our army at home, however, recruits come in at all times, so that it occurs frequently that a man who has enlisted in one year may not go through the annual course of collective field training with his company until the following year. For example, a man may enlist in September and remain three months at the depôt, joining the home battalion in January. He will then be required to complete his long course of physical training, to pass his drill on the barrack square and to perform his recruit's course of target practice. This will take three or four months, and by that time the company will have completed its course of field training which takes place in the months of March, April and May.

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The recruit then joins his company and takes part in battalion, brigade and divisional training, and also in the army manœuvres without ever having been through a course of company training, unless, as is possible sometimes, a large party of recruits belonging to different companies are put through a course of field training as casuals.

Very similar conditions exist in the territorial army, which comes out for training, as a whole, for a fortnight each year. The individual soldiers, however, who compose this army are not always able to remain the whole fortnight, because they cannot leave their work in civil life for so long a period, the result being that some men come out for the first week only and some for the second week. The situation then is very difficult to deal with, because the men who have come out for a fortnight have done progressive training for a week, and the men who come out for the last week must join in at the stage which the majority have reached. In India, the colonies and dependencies the disadvantages in the regular army as regards progressive training do not exist, because the men join the battalion as drafts from home, at certain fixed periods of the year and in mass, and it is easy to arrange for all of them to go through the annual course of field training with their companies, the only disturbing element being that when the battalion is in India they join in the winter or early spring, when company training for that season is already completed, and consequently they do not go through their annual company training until the following winter.

As already indicated the only way to overcome these difficulties in the regular army is for recruits and drafts to be put through a course of field training as casuals, where they miss the advantage of being trained by the officer commanding the company they have joined, but

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nevertheless undergo a sound course of instruction under a specially selected officer, who is himself taken away from his company for the purpose. In the territorial army the comparatively few must suffer for the majority, and those who join for the second week only must lose their progressive training for the first week, and those who join for the first week only must lose their progressive training for the second week. The time is so short that it is essential that the progressive training should continue, as such, throughout the whole fortnight.

Before deciding upon the actual programme of work it is desirable to understand fully what the term progressive training implies. Every trade and science is taught progressively; for example, if a student wishes to learn mathematics he must commence by a knowledge of numerals, and how they can be added, subtracted, multiplied and divided. He then goes on to the application of this knowledge, which involves the solution of every-day problems, such as the price of four pounds of butter at 1/1 a pound. The problems gradually become more difficult until he reaches the higher branches of mathematics, involving a study of algebra, trigonometry, &c.

Here, and in most trades and sciences, it is easy to separate the elementary from the more advanced instruction, but it is far more difficult in the case of field training, which involves several branches of instruction, all more or less distinct in themselves. For example, the field training of the individual soldier is divided into three very marked and distinct branches. The art of attack, the art of defence, and the service of security. It cannot be said that a man must learn to attack before he can defend, or before he can be taught the service of security, the teaching in each case being totally different. It is like a schoolboy learning arithmetic, French and

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history at the same time; and we must treat these three branches of the soldier's instruction in the same manner as the schoolboy is taught, and each must be progressive.

The first question that arises naturally is whether we are to follow the analogy closely, and devote part of each day to the three distinct subjects, as in the case of the schoolboy, or whether we should devote one day to each branch? The schoolboy does an hour or so of arithmetic, and then he learns French, and then he studies history, all in the same morning. No schoolboy spends a whole day doing any one of these things, for the good reason that his brain is incapable of retaining more than a limited amount of knowledge of any one subject at one time, although it can retain three times the amount if there are three different subjects. The reason for this is easily explained so far as the schoolboy and his three subjects are concerned.

The science of arithmetic deals with combinations of the numbers 0 to 9, and whatever the problem may be on which the boy is engaged he is constantly adding, subtracting, dividing or multiplying a combination of these ten numbers. The method of working out the particular problem so as to arrive at a correct solution gives some relief to the brain, but the continuous monotony of dealing with the same numbers will soon weary the boy and prevent his brain from continuing its receptive and retentive powers When learning French or history the boy's brain is constantly employed in storing up words and phrases in a strange language or facts in history. In both cases the storage power of the brain is limited, and although instruction may continue for several hours, the knowledge gained permanently will be limited to what might have been learnt in little more than one hour. Different cells of the brain appear to be acted upon by different subjects, and consequently the

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boy can spend three continuous hours, and profitable hours, studying three subjects, but it would be useless to devote the whole time to one.

We must now consider whether the same theory applies to the three subjects which we are anxious to teach the soldier. Are we during company training to devote one-third of the day to the attack, one-third to the defence, and one-third to the service of security? There are some people who will reply to this in the affirmative, and give as a reason that the soldier gets weary of doing the same thing over and over again throughout a whole day's work. This appears to be a good reason, but before we accept it we must be quite sure, first, whether the soldier is doing the same thing over and over again; and, secondly, whether it is possible on the one piece of ground which has been allotted to us for our morning's work to instruct the men in all three subjects.

The question appears to be greatly influenced by the ground. If a man spends the whole day attacking over the same piece of ground he will naturally lose interest in his work, and after he has once learned how to advance over that bit of ground he will learn nothing more. Constant repetition is no doubt necessary for any form of physical perfection, such as handling arms on parade, performing conjuring tricks, or playing any outdoor game, but it is wearisome when applied to the training of the intelligence. In the case of the three subjects that we have to teach our men, everything depends upon the ground. A soldier has to learn that what is right on one piece of ground is wrong on another, and unless an example on one type of ground is immediately followed by an example on another, and again on a third, the man will not be able to compare one with another and realize the most important lesson of all, namely, that he has to

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act on his own initiative and adapt his movements to the nature of the ground. There is really no repetition in this, and there is nothing wearisome, because, according to the nature of the ground, a different solution of a similar problem is constantly being explained to the men.

The company goes out in the morning knowing that it is going to be trained in the attack, and knowing also that the length of each advance, the selection of the halting places and fire positions, the pace to be adopted, and the control and the direction of the fire, will depend almost entirely upon the nature of the ground and the position occupied by the enemy. Although the area allotted to the company may be small, an advance across it may be made from several different directions, and during each advance the ground will differ, something fresh will crop up, and the interest and instruction of the men will be retained throughout.

If, on the other hand, the company goes out and spends part of the time attacking, part defending, and part upon the service of security, there will be a waste of time changing from one class of operation to another; the war atmosphere in one case will be totally different to the others; the men's minds will become confused with the different principles which apply to each, and opportunities of applying the same principle to different types of ground will be lost.

It appears to be desirable, therefore, to allot distinct days to each of these branches of the soldier's instruction for war, so that he can spend the whole day with a few general principles in his mind and learn to apply them in different situations and on different ground.

The next question which demands our attention is, how are we to divide the work so as to ensure progressive training? With the schoolboy it is simple; he commences his arithmetic with easy calculations in addition

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and subtraction and goes on to multiplication, division, &c. When learning the foreign language he commences with simple words and phrases, and when studying history he usually commences at a certain period and works forward chronologically. It appears to be difficult to apply any of those methods to the training of the soldier for war, but perhaps the analogy of history approaches our requirements more nearly than any other subject. As the boy learns history he learns a great many other things in the shape of the meanings of such matters as systems of governments, treaties, wars, alliances, &c. We can apply the chronological idea by commencing work in the initial stages of an operation and gradually moving on until we reach the ultimate climax. The soldier will then resemble the schoolboy learning history, because in addition to the simple details of the work he is engaged upon he will learn many other matters, such as fire discipline, selection of fire positions, the correct use of ground, &c.

There is no doubt that the first thing to do is to prepare the minds of the men for the reception and retention of the lessons that we wish to teach them on the ground. This is recognized by the regulations, and the winter months are devoted to what is called individual training, which must also be progressive. So we will deal first with individual training and then with collective training.

The recruit, when he joins, knows little or nothing about the ordinary military terms, such as outposts, advance guards, fire positions, attack and defence, &c. These things are taught him during the period of individual training by means of lectures in the barrack rooms and frequent visits to any ground there may be available close at hand, not actually to practise the men in the attack or defence, &c., but to demonstrate on the

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ground what has been taught during the lecture. For example, we will suppose that a captain has been lecturing to his men on the subject of the selection of fire positions in the attack. The section commanders, or even the squad commanders, can take out their sections or squads to some place close by and explain to the men that the company is attacking towards that house and that the enemy are firing from that direction. He then continues: "You remember what the captain said about choosing a good fire position during the advance. We want to use our rifles with effect, so we must be able to see the position of the enemy. We don't want to be hit ourselves, if we can help it, so we should like a bit of cover, such as a bank or a slight rise in the ground, &c., &c. Now, Private Jones, do you think where we are standing is a good place for a fire position?" "No." "Why not?" "We can see the enemy alright, but if we lie down here he will see us even better than we can see him, and be able to shoot us much easier than we can shoot him."

"Now, Private Smith, can you choose a better place close by?" &c.

"Private Robinson, can you choose a better place a little further off?"

A quarter of an hour's instruction in this manner, after the lecture is over, will teach the whole squad, not only the truth of what the captain has been explaining, but the reason why one place is better than another. The same system can be adopted when selecting a place for a sentry, or deciding upon the site for a trench in the defence, or for practice in fire discipline, direction and control. When to fire, and when not to fire, why the whole squad or section should fire in one direction rather than in another, &c.

The salient points of the lecture should first be

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repeated to the men, and then one man asked to say what he thinks would be the best thing to do. It appears hardly necessary to say that the instructor must never try to raise a laugh against any individual man, because it will only destroy his self-confidence, which it is one of our objects to increase. If a man cannot give an answer or choose a suitable place, let us explain the requirements again, try to make him use his common sense, and bring in some youthful reminiscence which will appeal to him. For example, the action of a sentry is very similar to his own action when his friends were engaged with farmer Jones' apple orchard, and he was posted to give warning of the approach of that irascible individual. Or the occasion when he adopted a defensive attitude behind a wall and snowballed his friends or enemies as they passed along the road. He selected this position because he could see to fire without being seen by the enemy, he had a good field of fire in front, and the wall made it difficult for the enemy to assault the position and come to close quarters with a thick stick, the counterpart of the bayonet. The selection of the line of advance for a patrol can be compared to the efforts of a small boy, who has not got the necessary sixpence, to effect an entrance into, or at least a position of observation, where he can see a menagerie, circus, or cinematograph show. He chooses a covered approach which is likely to be unguarded, and is also likely to lead to some place whence he can view the entertainment. Most enterprising youths have been engaged in some illegal or dangerous operations during their early life, and the methods of precaution and action which they then adopted are very similar to what is required in war.

There is no occasion to take the men far or to keep them out a long time on a cold winter's day. The

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simple lessons that have been taught during the lecture can be demonstrated on almost any bit of ground near the barracks in a few minutes, and these lessons will then become firmly fixed in the brain of the recruit ready for use whenever he requires them.

We see, therefore, that during the winter months the soldier must be instructed in all the simple details of attack, defence and the service of security, so that when the time comes in the early spring for collective company training his mind is fitted to receive more advanced instruction, and to learn how to act to the best advantage for the company or section as a whole.

Before leaving this subject of individual training it is as well to review and place in order the various items, so as to ensure that the instruction is progressive. In the attack there are five stages which a soldier should understand from the beginning.

First, the advance when possibly exposed to hostile artillery fire, but when too far away from the enemy's position to suffer from his infantry fire or to use the rifle against the enemy with effect. This involves three important details: the formation to be adopted, the pace, and the selection of halting-places.

Secondly, the further advance when the enemy's position has been approached sufficiently close for the men to use their rifles with effect. This is more difficult than the first stage and requires more careful training, which includes formations, which must now be in extended order; the first reinforcements of the firing line, and possible confusion in the sections; the control and direction of the fire; the pace to be adopted when exposed to the enemy's fire, and when advancing over ground which is dead to the enemy; the selection of fire positions and halting-places, if the latter are absolutely necessary, to rest the men; the husbanding of ammunition, and

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the assistance which will be afforded by our own artillery.

The third stage is when the company has reached the best fire position available, as close as possible to the enemy's position, where a further advance is impracticable until some superiority of fire over the enemy has been obtained. By this time it is probable that the whole company will have been absorbed in the firing line, and sections, if not whole companies, will have got mixed up. The two most important details of instruction during this stage are the maintenance of disciplined and consequently effective fire, together with implicit obedience on the part of groups of men who find themselves together to any officer or non-commissioned officer, whether belonging to their own company or not, who assumes command over them.

The fourth stage is the further advance after fire superiority has been gained, in order to collect sufficiently close to the enemy's position and in sufficient strength to assault with the bayonet. The chief features of this advance are short rushes by small groups and very powerful covering fire.

The fifth stage is the final assault upon the enemy's trenches, with the sole object of driving back his men. The main point in connection with this stage is to get as many men as possible to rise up together and charge the position.

During all these stages the men must be taught how the artillery are helping them forward, and how the cavalry and other troops are protecting their flanks. The men can learn, during the period of individual training, this simple outline of the conduct of an attack, each stage forming the subject of a separate lecture followed by a demonstration for a few minutes on the ground in the manner already indicated.

In the defence the lessons which require progressive teaching during individual training are: first, the object

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of defence, either to delay the operations of the enemy, so that our reinforcements may arrive or our troops may move into a more favourable position for battle; to deny ground to the enemy so that he cannot occupy it and interfere with our decisive attack which is taking place in another part of the field; or to retain possession of some locality which is of vital importance to our army or to its line of communications—but never to win a battle.

The recruit from the very first should be taught that battles cannot be won by defence, and that whenever it has been tried in actual war it has always ended, sooner or later, in defeat. The next point is the selection of the fire position, where cover from the enemy's bullets, partly ensured by the ground and partly by trenches, must be arranged in conjunction with the frequently conflicting requirements of a good field of fire; finally, the co-operation of the artillery, the construction of obstacles and the clearing of ground to improve or increase the fire-swept zone.

The trajectory of the bullet, with reference to the surface of the ground over which it is fired, plays a very important part in the selection of fire positions for the defence, and should be understood by the men. It occurs frequently that from a commanding fire position the fire over the ground in front is, more or less, of a plunging nature; whereas, from a fire position on lower ground the trajectory would be almost parallel to the surface of the ground in front, and the fire would be more effective than in the first case. This means that what might appear to the men to be an excellent fire position is abandoned for what they may consider to be a more exposed position on lower ground (*see* Chapter XV).

During individual training, instruction in the service of security can be limited to sentry work, the action of patrols, the selection of a good fire position for the

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piquet, the general object of outposts, and the meaning of the various terms used in connection with them.

Other subjects such as bridging, musketry, semaphore signalling, &c., are indicated in the regulations and require no special discussion as regards teaching the men.

The progressive nature of individual training may be summed up as follows:

I. The attack, divided into five stages, as explained above, commencing with the first stage and ending up with the last.

II. The defence.
   1. The object of all defensive action.
   2. The selection of the fire position.
   3. The trajectory of the bullet with reference to the ground in front.
   4. The improvement of the foreground and the construction of obstacles.
   5. The assistance afforded by the artillery.

III. The service of security.
   1. The object of outposts, and the general system of their employment.
   2. The sentry and patrol.
   3. The piquet.

IV. Night operations.

Further details regarding instruction in all the above subjects will be found in the later chapters dealing with these matters. It requires some skill on the part of the company commander to decide what to teach during individual training and what to relegate to the collective training of the company. It is best to select for individual training the items which are elementary and of almost universal application, most of which can be demonstrated to the men on the ground in a few minutes, and to allot to collective training all details which require constant repetition on different types of ground.

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For example, if we take the fire position in the attack, we want to teach the men during individual training the difference between a good fire position and a bad one, and why one is good and another is bad. Instruction in the selection of fire positions during a continuous attack is best dealt with during the collective training of the company. The same remark applies to the defence, and to the service of security. If we can give the men during individual training some idea of what is good and what is bad, and the reasons, they will be ready to pick up the application of certain general principles when they come to collective company training, especially if our lectures have been supplemented by a few minutes' demonstration on the ground.

No mention has been made of advanced, rear, or flank guards, because they hardly enter into individual training. So far as the actual men are concerned when employed in such operations they are invariably engaged in either attack, defence, or scouting. The difference in the various types of attack, defence, &c., is a subject for collective training, and is dealt with in subsequent chapters.

Training in night operations during the individual period is required chiefly to accustom the men to move about in the dark, silently and without losing their formation; to practise them in finding their way in any given direction; and to train them to discriminate between the appearance of different objects such as trees, shrubs, buildings, large stones, cattle, and human beings.

During progressive individual training, which takes place in England in the winter when the nights are long, it is sufficient to take out the men for an hour or two after dark. The first object should be to accustom them to move about collectively and individually without making a noise and without losing their formation and direction. To work collectively the company or section should be

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taken over rough ground and the formations changed two or three times during the advance. Proficiency as regards silence and direction is merely a matter of practice, and not very difficult to attain. Working individually takes more time, and should be done in small parties, so that every man can be exercised. A good method is to take a group of men to the top of a rise, point out some object on the next rise in front and tell one man to go to it, and when he reaches it to light a match and then come back. Meanwhile another man can be sent in another direction and told to do the same thing. At first the objects can be within three or four hundred yards, but later they should be farther off. Care should be taken that a match struck by a man near the object selected will be visible from the starting-point, because if the match is not seen it will be clear proof that the man never reached the object. When the men become proficient in finding their way in this manner, an object can be selected which will be out of sight during some part of the advance. The value of this exercise is that it accustoms the men to find their way in the dark and gives them self-confidence. Marching out and back to the place selected can be done in a formed body, entrenching tools being carried sometimes, in addition to the ordinary marching-order equipment, so as to train the men to carry them without noise. The next step is to train the men's eyesight in the dark. The method of doing this is clearly laid down in the regulations. A good way of carrying out these regulations is to send out one man representing a hostile scout, and direct him to march slowly towards the party. The remainder of the men should be drawn up in single rank, told to watch for the approaching scout, and the first man who sees him to say "I see him." The officer will then shout "Halt!" to the hostile scout, who will remain perfectly still where he is, and the man who first saw him

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will be directed to lead the remainder up to him. The exercise should be carried out first of all on fairly open ground and then in more enclosed country.

If a man is successful, and has really seen the scout, he can "fall out," and the same operation can be repeated until all the men have observed the scout; the successful men taking no further part in the operation except that they can have a little competition of their own, if they are posted on the flank of the remainder, and within view of the approaching scout. In every case the exercise should be started from the place where the last scout was halted, to avoid delay in going back to the original starting-place and to change the general aspect of affairs.

A good method of training the men in sentry work at night, when they have obtained some proficiency in the above exercise, is to draw up the squad in single rank, let each man suppose that he is a sentry, and inform them that during the next half-hour four scouts will approach their post at different times from the general direction of the enemy. The procedure is the same as before, except that when the man who first speaks has successfully led the party to the scout, they should go back to the original place of assembly, otherwise it is difficult to arrange for the remaining scouts to advance in the right direction. It is advisable to have a small lantern with the party, so that the scout can come in from the right direction and not from outside the arc of observation of the man. This arc should not exceed about 120°, the centre of the arc being directly to the front. There is no occasion for the successful men to "fall out" during this exercise; in fact, it can be conducted on the lines of a competition, any man being successful twice or more during the half-hour being given a small prize. The sustained effort of watching for a considerable time is very valuable training.

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During all the above exercises the men will be using their ears as much as their eyes, but if it is considered desirable to have special sound tests it can easily be arranged by a waggon or horse moving towards the party from a distance, or by a scout in front advancing with some part of his accoutrements loose so that they rattle. Good hearing is very valuable by night, but not so useful as well-trained eyes, shooting at sound not being so satisfactory as shooting at something which is actually seen.

The next step in the progressive work during individual training is instruction in the selection of fire positions at night, special attention being paid to the advantage of firing uphill towards a more or less luminous skyline, instead of downhill into a pitch dark valley. The method of carrying out this exercise individually is the same as that already explained by day. Instruction can also be given in the use of flares with their screens, and in appliances for ensuring the correct elevation of the rifle.

Patrolling and scouting by night is best left to collective company training, where there is a definite scheme, an established outpost position, and probably an opposing force. During collective company training it is necessary for night operations to continue until dawn, because otherwise the training is not sufficiently protracted for the men to obtain real benefit and to appreciate the difficulties of lengthened effort in such work. It is usual to give the company a light day's work before night operations, whereas the reverse should be the case, so that the men can have experience of what night work is like in war, after, perhaps, a hard march, and when they are very tired. It is desirable, as a rule, to have a heavy day's work followed by operations lasting the whole night, give the men a holiday next day, and take advantage of the occasion to impart indoor instruction.

The progressive nature of collective training can follow

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on much the same lines as above, but there is one disturbing influence which will frequently upset our programme.

It is absolutely essential that the ground allotted to us for any one day's training is suitable to the class of operation we propose to carry out. For example, it is useless to practise the first stage of an attack over ground where the view is restricted to a few hundred yards and where the enemy's distant artillery positions cannot be pointed out to the company, because they cannot be seen. In such circumstances in war the company could advance comfortably in fours. Similarly, in defence it is highly desirable to have an area of country where a fire position can be selected which, as far as the general view is concerned, is fairly open for over 1000 yards to the front, though a good deal of it may be dead ground to the defence. To construct defences in positions which would be quite untenable in war, such as a small field or digging ground, is very bad teaching for the men. If they require instruction in actual digging it is much better to employ them in making something useful, like a cricket ground, than to give them false ideas at a highly receptive stage of their training. Any sort of ground is suitable for training in the service of security, which can be carried out on or close to roads, or in very thick, enclosed or very open country.

The ideal programme for the collective training of a company demands conditions which do not always exist; it is worth while, nevertheless, to discuss it and endeavour to introduce as few modifications as circumstances will permit. The officer commanding the company should know beforehand the exact area of ground that will be allotted to his company for each day of his training. This will enable him to prepare a definite programme beforehand, and decide upon which day he is going to carry out each different class of operation, so

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that the latter may suit the ground. At the close of every day's operations he should visit his area for the next day and map out exactly on the ground the various exercises he proposes to carry out, and ascertain, by studying the ground, the most useful lessons that he can bring forward during the day's work. On returning to barracks for the usual lecture before the next day's work, he will bring into prominence the lessons he has decided upon, and he will give the necessary instructions to the officers and non-commissioned officers under his command, pointing out what difficulties are likely to arise during the next day's work, and how they should be overcome. However well the officer may know the training-ground, it is essential for this visit to be paid to it before the next day's operations, and for the various stages to be worked out beforehand, otherwise the instruction will lose a great deal of its value. No one can remember even a small piece of ground well enough to do this without going over it beforehand with the actual scheme of operations in his head, unless the ground is absolutely flat and featureless. An attack delivered from south to north will bring out totally different lessons to an attack delivered over the same piece of ground from the same starting-point, but in a north-easterly or north-westerly direction. No doubt it is a great trouble to do all this, and many officers who are very hard workers and very good instructors are apt to think they can do quite well without it, and perhaps they can, but they won't be doing their best. Method is dull, but it is the tortoise in the race, so far as sound instruction goes; and the more agile hare, representing the keen intellect and the vivid imagination, so valuable for purposes of training, is apt to be left in the lurch. In any case, method in this matter of the programme will turn a bad instructor into a good one, because he

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will know every night when he is going to bed that he has got certain lessons to bring out to his men next day, and if a company only learns one or two lessons every time it goes out its commander is certainly not a bad instructor.

The next step in the preparation of the programme is to decide upon the number of days that is to be allotted to each type of exercise, leaving a balance to be filled in later for necessary repetitions, the demand for which will appear during the course of training.

In the ideal programme of collective training, with no disturbing elements as regards training-ground or other cause, it would be best to put the company, first of all, through one continuous course of the attack, devoting the first day to the first stage of the attack; namely, the advance when exposed to hostile artillery fire, and when the distance from the enemy's position is too great to use rifle fire. The second, third and fourth days could be devoted to the second stage of the attack, which requires more careful training than any part of the whole course of instruction, constantly repeating the same thing over ever-varying ground; one exercise each day being conducted on the demonstration system and the remainder as practice. The fifth and sixth days can be allotted to the struggle for superiority of fire, the advance to within assaulting distance and the final assault. During these two days the closest attention should be paid to fire direction and control, the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the company being made to realize that upon this depends to a great extent the success of the attack. The seventh day can be devoted to the attack in all its stages. Two such attacks should be possible, and are very valuable because the different ground in each and its influence on the selection of fire positions, formations adopted, &c., can be compared and many useful lessons deduced.

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That would finish the attack for the time being, and, as the men had had a hard day, it would be advantageous to carry out night operations the same evening, the company remaining on the training-ground and cooking their dinners, a lecture being delivered to the men on the new subject during the afternoon. From the progressive point of view the best form of night work would be to split up the company into two imaginary outpost companies and let each section find a piquet and the necessary sentries and patrols, the remainder of each outpost company being imaginary. The object of this exercise is to train the men in the duties of sentry by night, patrolling by night, and the action of the piquet when attacked. It is an advantage to commence with outposts by night rather than by day, because the former are more difficult, more important and more frequently used than the latter. The main body is almost always resting at night, until actual contact with the enemy is gained, but it is frequently moving by day, when it is otherwise protected. An enemy should be provided, to disturb different parts of the outposts at different times during the night, the last attack taking place just before dawn.

The eighth day would be a rest after the night work, with only a lecture on the next day's work. The ninth day might be devoted to the defence, actually digging the trenches if possible, but in any case siteing them, the exercise being carried out on the demonstration system. When digging is not permitted two or more positions should be occupied during the day; in every case each section should examine the positions selected by the others, the reasons for the difference in the general occupation of one position as compared with the others being carefully explained to the men.

The tenth day could again be employed in defensive work, special attention being paid to clearing the fore-

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ground, the siteing and construction of obstacles, making range marks, and considering the distribution of fire from the trenches. On this day the position should be attacked so as to exercise officers, non-commissioned officers and men in fire direction and control, the proceedings culminating in a counterstroke delivered out of the trenches against the attacking enemy, who had failed to establish superiority of fire and were unable to gain sufficient ground to the front to make an assault possible.

The eleventh day can be devoted to the service of security, dealing with outposts by day; the company being divided into two or more imaginary outpost companies, the piquet and sentry line alone being actually established. The main feature of the day's work would be the selection of positions for sentries, training the sentries to discover any movement in front, arrangements being made for hostile scouts to creep up to the sentry line at different times and in different places during the day. Attention would also be paid to the defensive arrangements for the piquets, the construction of trenches and obstacles, establishment of secure lines of retreat for the sentries on to the flank of the piquet and the training of patrols, as already suggested in Chapter IV.

The twelfth day can again be employed in outpost work, on this occasion the company acting as a normal outpost company complete in all its details. When one position has been occupied the men should be instructed in the reasons why the sentries, piquets, and supports, if any, are placed in the various localities. Each part of the outpost company will then visit the places occupied by other parts, including the sentries, and the reason why patrols have been sent in one direction and not in another will be explained The situation can now be changed, by the company moving to the position occupied by the next outpost company on the right or left flank. Com-

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parisons can then be made between the two positions and differences in methods of occupation explained. When the position of the flank outpost company has been taken up and everything is satisfactorily arranged an order can be issued that the company will be required to remain on duty until 6 A.M. next morning, and that dispositions for night outposts are to be reconnoitred at once and established immediately after dark. The company should remain on outpost duty all night, patrols being frequently sent out and always accompanied by an instructor, not so much to tell them what to do as to discover whether they have learnt their duties or whether they require further instruction. The officers and non-commissioned officers and many of the men will get but little sleep, but that is immaterial as the company is out for instruction, not for practice.

The thirteenth day would be a rest.

The fourteenth day might be devoted to the action of a company forming part of an advance guard. It would be best to commence with the action of the vanguard and instruct the company in deploying rapidly and immediately attacking small localities, either in front or to the flank, which had been occupied by the enemy's dismounted cavalry and which our cavalry had failed to dislodge. If a squadron can be got to assist in this day's work the company and squadron can work together, the enemy being represented by skeleton troops carefully placed to produce the situations required, *vide* Chapter XXII on the employment of skeleton troops. The difference between an attack of this nature as compared with other attacks should be explained to the men (*vide* Chapter XI).

On the fifteenth day the company could again be trained in the duties of an advance guard. On this occasion the company might be supposed to be part of the main guard, coming up with artillery to support the

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action of the vanguard which had been stopped. Here again the importance of rapid deployment and attack would be brought home to the company, every effort being made to secure the most important and commanding ground in front, even although it might not be directly on the main line of advance of the force. It would be supposed that other companies and some artillery were operating with the company at training.

The sixteenth day could be utilized for training in a rear-guard action. The necessity for occupying a wider front than in ordinary defensive positions would be pointed out and the system of one part of the company retiring covered by the fire of another part, assisted by imaginary artillery, would be practised. If a squadron is available it would be good training for the company and squadron commanders to work together, the cavalry acting on the flanks. It is very difficult to ensure co-operation between the quick-moving cavalry and the slow-moving infantry, so that special attention would be paid to this matter. A skeleton force with pole targets would be provided to represent the enemy, and as they move very slowly it would be advisable to have two or three such parties hidden on the flank of the line of retreat so that they could attack directly the rear-guard passes them. A rear-guard action is supposed to be a most difficult operation to conduct successfully, but this is probably a legend of the past, because it appears from recent experience in Manchuria and elsewhere that with modern weapons there is no great difficulty in covering a retiring force. In the old days, with short-range muzzle-loading muskets, the enemy were upon the rear-guard before the actual fight commenced, and consequently it was extremely difficult for the latter to extricate itself; in fact, it was frequently necessary for the rear-guard to attack before it could get away. With modern weapons

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there is a long fire fight before the enemy get close enough to imperil the rear-guard, and, in consequence, there is plenty of time to offer serious resistance and at the same time get away before there is risk of disaster. The great danger, of course, is from mounted troops getting round the flank of the rear-guard.

The seventeenth day could be devoted to outposts by day, the operations commencing in the afternoon. The object would be to practise the action of an outpost company, when another imaginary outpost company on its flank has been driven back, and the company itself is heavily attacked. This operation would closely resemble the action of a rear-guard, as far as the company is concerned, except that it must not on any account fall back beyond the fighting position which the imaginary main body is intended to occupy. It might then be supposed that the enemy has been repulsed, that the main body has bivouacked in a more forward position, and that the company has been directed, after dark, to occupy part of an outpost position which has been indicated on the map, and which has not been reconnoitred during daylight These outposts would be taken up by the company in the dark, the piquets entrenched, &c., and would be constantly disturbed during the night by hostile patrols.

Other details as regards bridging, &c., would be carried out and the company would then have completed its elementary collective training. Attention should again be turned to the attack, the seven different types being practised in turn (*vide* p. 106), and each repeated on varying types of ground. An example of the method of conducting a night attack is given in Chapter XIII. The remaining days would be allotted to repetitions and to the inspection by the commanding officer.

The object of drawing up this programme is merely to show how the time can be filled up, and to bring into

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prominence the most important part of the soldier's training, namely, the attack and night work. The latter is always harassing, but in modern days proficiency in night work is essential, and it cannot be attained without practice during the whole night; to go out at 6 P.M. and come home at 11 P.M. is practically useless. The sentries do not experience the strain of watching for two hours on end in darkness, and the patrols have not sufficient opportunity of learning their work. Outposts either by day or night should never be practised without an enemy; when this is neglected the sentries learn very little.

Many officers will disagree with the suggestion that several days should be devoted to one subject, and, furthermore, they may not be able to get training areas on so many consecutive days which are suitable for this one subject. The chief objection appears to be that the men will get tired of doing one class of operation, and if there is any fear of this it will be better to change the subjects. It is probable, however, that if the instruction is carried out on the demonstration principle the interest of the men will be retained throughout, and the advantage of the whole company being thoroughly grounded in one subject before going on to another appears to be very great.

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CHAPTER VI

THE COMPANY IN ATTACK

THE DOMINATING INFLUENCE OF ATTACK IN WAR AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES THAT MUST BE STUDIED

It has already been pointed out that success in war depends entirely upon the power of one or other belligerent to initiate, continue and complete a series of vigorous attacks upon his opponent. It has been suggested that to attack is most difficult, to defend is far easier, and to do nothing is the easiest of all.

The importance of the attack, as compared with any other form of military operation, is so vast that it practically swamps the remainder. The service of security is necessary and the defence is necessary, but they are only means to an end, the main object of any first-rate commander is to use them with two definite objects.

First, to bring every possible man in the best possible state, physically and morally, on to the field of battle at the vital point, and

Second, to attack the enemy at that vital point with such rapidity, vigour and determination, that he is unable to withstand the blow and is driven from the field.

This is the greatest of all the so-called principles of war; it is in reality a fixed and unalterable rule which

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can never be neglected by small detachments or whole armies without ultimate defeat and disaster.

The commander, or the army, or the small detachment that goes into the field to meet the enemy with any idea of waiting on events to seize a favourable moment, or of adopting a defensive attitude on account of numerical weakness, except as a means to subsequent attack with the whole force which is not immediately available, is from the very commencement of the struggle throwing the trump cards into the enemy's hands. In every campaign that has been fought in the last fifty years the truth of this statement has been declared so forcibly that there can exist no reason to doubt it. War, however, is conducted and carried out by human beings, who are subject to the frailties of human nature. It is easy to defend, it is so easy to wait upon events in the excellent strategical and tactical position which we have been able to secure, and so difficult to leave that position and rend the curtain of mystery which is closely drawn in front of us and seems to hide so many possible dangers and uncertainties.

The enemy is in greatly superior numbers, a defensive offensive attitude is approved by many authorities on war, and was practised with success by such great leaders as Napoleon and Wellington. The circumstances which brought about the great battles of Austerlitz and Waterloo are forgotten. We do not remember that Napoleon could not move a yard further into Moravia to attack the allies owing to the length of his lines of communication, which were already stretched to breaking-point, and were most precariously situated at the mercy of a powerful nation which was on the eve of declaring war against him. We do not remember that Wellington only stood on the defensive at Waterloo to enable Blucher to come up on the flank and attack, and that

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if he had continued his retreat it would have been impossible for Blucher to join him, and consequently Napoleon, with greatly superior forces, could have defeated the allies in detail. In the American civil war the offensive attitude of the Confederates won them campaign after campaign, and it was only when their resources failed, and their numbers had been vastly reduced, that the Federals were able to bring them to terms. In the 1877 campaign the Russians attacked everywhere and the Turks defended without success. By the irony of fate, nearly thirty years later the Russians, acting on the defensive, were beaten by the very tactics that they had successfully employed themselves. In 1866 against the Austrians, and in 1870 against the French, in the first case the Prussian and in the second the whole German army adopted everywhere the attack and won without serious difficulty. In the campaign in European Turkey we see exactly the same thing. The allies pressed forward, rent apart the mysterious curtain that hung in front of them, and found, as usual, that the dangers behind it fled away before the paralysing breath of an attack which was vigorously maintained and continued to the final assault. We shall find it again in the next great war. Put any army we like against the other, put what we think is the stronger on the defensive, and imbue it with the defensive spirit, and the weaker on the offensive, and the latter will win as sure as there is a sun in the heavens.

Let us study the defensive as a means to subsequent attack; let us take care of our service of security, so that we may reach the battlefield strong and vigorous for attack; but let us remember that these are little things, and that the only weapon which can possibly lead us to success is the spirit of offensive from the highest to the lowest. This spirit will carry the army against the

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enemy in vigorous attacks, on every possible occasion, and without any hesitation, looking back, or undue consideration of real or imaginary dangers.

There is no nation in the world whose soldiers, officers, non-commissioned officers, and men are more ready to attack than ours. Critics may point to the Boer War and say that our attacks were not always pressed with great vigour or with very successful results. Nevertheless, the offensive spirit was there, and it eventually won a campagin which it would have taken any other nation twice the time to bring to a successful conclusion. The critics do not realize the vastness of the theatre of war, the difficulties of supply, and the almost complete absence of hostile feeling between the British soldiers and their temporary enemy. When, however, the army is called out to defend the integrity of the Empire, and when we all feel that unless we win we shall be shorn of our possessions and commence the downward path followed by so many nations to obscurity, then the spirit of the offensive will rise within us, and, if we are properly trained in peace time, we shall enter upon the campaign with the fixed knowledge that nothing can lead to success but the attack. Furthermore, that this attaek, unless pressed home with the utmost vigour and with every man thrown into the fight, and unless continued and maintained by every commander, high or low, and every company, is not really an attack at all, but merely another of those spurious operations of the offensive defensive nature which rarely lead to success.

Every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man must be so trained in peace that when war comes he is thoroughly imbued with this dominating spirit of attack. It is useless for him to accept it blindly, because it will then fail him in the time of need. He must realize in peace the great difficulties of the attack; he must understand that he

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will be surrounded by temptations in war to do anything but attack, and that only by training his character, and with the startling examples of previous campaigns staring him in the face, can he hope to resist these temptations and be ready at any moment to initiate, continue, and press home, in the most vigorous manner possible, the only method of war which will lead to success—the attack.

The answer to the old question, "What is the first duty of a soldier?" might be changed to "attack." It is useless for us to smile and think, "Oh, yes, every one knows that it is the proper thing to attack in war," and then dismiss the matter from our minds. What we require is no such vague idea which is apt to be blown away like thistledown on the first breath of battle, but an absolutely fixed conviction which is so strong that we should no more think of neglecting it than we should think of running away in the face of the enemy, and that the very idea of neglecting it would produce in our minds the same feeling of shame and repugnance. If we can feel like that, or if we can train ourselves to feel like that, then we officers, non-commissioned officers, and men alike, are possessed of the most powerful weapons for success that can be placed in our hand on any battlefield.

Let us remember the great part that is played by the infantry soldier in war. The artillery help us, the cavalry help us, and the engineers are there to confirm our success and overcome obstacles, but it is the infantry soldier, officer and man, who must bear the great stress of battle. He has no immovable gun to serve, and no horse to carry him forward; of his own initiative he advances against the enemy's position with a fixed determination to drive him back and defeat him. It is not generally considered that he requires any very high training, and yet his training in the correct use of the ground and of his rifle, in the

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dire stress of battle, is more complicated and more difficult that that of any other arm of the service. He is more influenced than any other soldier by those characteristics of the human mind which are adverse to success; ground is never the same and can never be treated in the same way, and therefore we can give him no fixed rules to work by.

Having realized the dominating influence of the attack in war, we can now consider the general circumstances surrounding such an operation, and endeavour to fix certain principles which will help us when working out the details of our instruction to the company. We will select seven different kinds of attack which, as regards preparation, formation, rapidity of advance, and fire action, differ considerably from each other. They may be described briefly, as follows:—

(1) The attack in a battle against an enemy holding a defensive position, where the company is part of a much larger force and is required to advance for a long distance exposed to the enemy's artillery fire, and subsequently to his artillery and infantry fire, before the assault can be delivered. This is what might be called the stereotyped form of attack.

(2) The attack similar to (1), but where the preliminary advance, owing to the features of the ground, is not exposed to hostile artillery fire until the enemy's position is approached close enough for the company to use their rifles.

(3) The encounter attack, where the company itself, advancing with others to attack, is attacked by the enemy, or is suddenly fired upon from some locality in front or on the

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flank which it was not expected was occupied by the enemy.

(4) The advanced guard attack.

(5) The counter-attack, where the company, originally on the defensive, issues out and attacks the enemy who have been attacking the company.

(6) An attack or assault under cover of darkness.

(7) An attack at dawn, either from a fire position occupied on the previous day or after a night advance.

In the first-mentioned type of attack there is usually plenty of time for preparation. Orders have been issued by all commanders, the situation has been explained to the officer commanding the company, and the direction of advance and objective of the company have been pointed out to him on the ground. He knows that the attack will be carried out in five stages. First he must advance exposed to hostile artillery fire only, the distance from the enemy's position being too great for the men to use their rifles with effect. He will, in consequence, adopt formations which are difficult for the enemy's artillery to deal with, he will move rapidly over ground where the enemy's shells are bursting in great numbers, he will halt for rest in places where the enemy cannot see him, and he will move at a walk over ground which is not being fired at by the enemy's guns. His main object will be to get forward as rapidly as possible without suffering more casualties than can be helped and without exhausting his men.

The second stage of the attack commences when the enemy's position is sufficiently close for the men to use their rifles, and ends when the company has reached a fire position where it comes under such a heavy fire from the enemy

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that further advance is impossible until that fire has been reduced. During this advance the company will be exposed to both the artillery and infantry fire of the defence, formations must be in extended order, and it will be necessary to reinforce the firing line to help it forward. The great object of the company will be to go forward from one good fire position to another, to pass over ground exposed to the enemy's bullets as rapidly as possible, and move at a walk over ground which is not so exposed. The object being still to husband the energies of the men so as to keep them fresh for the great fire fight which is now about to commence.

The third stage of the attack is the struggle for superiority of fire.

The fourth stage is the advance from this position after the enemy's fire has been reduced so as to gain a locality close enough to the enemy's position to deliver the assault.

The fifth stage is the assault with the bayonet.

The second type of attack is similar to the first with the first stage left out, because the company is not exposed to hostile artillery fire. At the commencement of this attack the firing line must be as strong as it would have been in the first type of attack on reaching the same distance from the enemy. For example, if a company has been able to advance under cover to within 900 yards of the enemy's position, and there is a good fire position three or four hundred yards to the front, the company must attack over the intervening space; and as they are so close to the enemy's position, an adequate firing line must be deployed from the very commencement.

The third type is the encounter attack. Here there is no time for elaborate preparations. The most essential point is to advance as rapidly as possible, and develop the heaviest and most effective fire that can be brought to bear

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on the enemy. This means that the firing line must at once be reinforced to its full capacity. The next essential point is that the attack should be continued, superiority of fire obtained, and the enemy assaulted in the same manner as in the first type of attack. The danger to avoid in this case is the adoption of a defensive attitude. Whichever side continues the attack without delay is bound to throw the other side on the defensive, possibly on ground which is not very good for defence. In this case the second stage of the attack is reached at once, and there is no first stage.

The fourth type of attack is that made by an advanced guard when the enemy's advanced troops are first met. Here everything depends upon rapidity of advance, with every man in the fighting line, few or no reserves, and an attempt to drive back the enemy before he has time to reinforce his leading troops or establish himself in the position he has reached.

The fifth type of attack is the most difficult of all, because the men have been acting on the defensive, and it is not easy to get them to leave their trenches and initiate an attack. It would be commenced with a very strong firing line. Sometimes it would take the form of an assault, if the enemy had been able to get very close to the position.

The sixth type is usually carried out in close formation, the main object being to get as near as possible to the enemy's position, thus avoiding the heavy casualties which are inseparable from a long advance and attack by day, and then assault with the bayonet, if possible without firing at all.

The seventh type of attack is little more than a variation of the sixth. There is the same object as regards avoidance of casualties, but the most accurate timing is necessary to ensure that the attacking troops arrive at the

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right place and can advance from there without any delay just as it is getting daylight. This method of attack might be employed when, during the previous day's fighting, the attempts to gain superiority of fire and advance to a position close enough to assault had failed, especially if the cause was due chiefly to the defender's superiority of artillery fire.

All these attacks will be dealt with in detail later, and the only object of mentioning them here is to classify certain marked types which constantly occur in war.

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CHAPTER VII

THE COMPANY IN ATTACK

THE FIRST STAGE OF THE ATTACK; THE ADVANCE OF THE COMPANY WHEN EXPOSED TO HOSTILE ARTILLERY FIRE, BUT BEYOND EFFECTIVE RANGE OF THE ENEMY'S INFANTRY FIRE.

When training the company in the five stages of the attack, it is necessary for us to teach the men how to act during each of these stages as regards the use of their weapons, the use of the ground, and the pace and formation to be adopted. We will suppose that the company is assembled under cover of some hill or wood four or five thousand yards from the enemy's position, and that directly the company leaves this cover and advances there is every probability that it will be fired upon by the enemy's guns. We will suppose, further, that we are teaching recruits, who know little or nothing about the attack, because if we do this we shall not miss out any small details, but can easily omit those that are unnecessary when instructing the trained soldier.

We must first impress upon the recruit the vast importance of the attack, as compared with any other operation in war (see Chap. VI), and bring home to him the fact that no battles can be won without attack. It is the same when two men are boxing; if one man always defends and never hits back, he will never knock the other man down and win the contest. It is the same at football,

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cricket, or any other game; if one side contents itself with keeping the ball out of their goal or wicket, and never hits out to make runs or presses forward to kick goals, onlookers will regard that side with contempt.

The first question we must ask is, "What are we trying to do when the company commences the attack?"

We are trying to drive back the enemy from some position which he is holding, or from some ground which he is advancing over.

"Which is the most important from our point of view, the ground which the enemy is holding, or the enemy's troops themselves?"

The enemy's troops, wherever they may be, or whatever they may be doing, are the sole object of our attack. If we confine ourselves to attacking some particular locality, which it is believed that the enemy is defending or advancing across, we may find, later on, that he is in some other locality, and we must at once make the necessary changes in our dispositions to meet the new situation. Ground comes into our operations to a very great extent, but it is never the ground that we are attacking, but always the enemy's soldiers, whom we must defeat and drive back wherever we find them. The only way in which we can defeat them and drive them back is to close up to them with the bayonet and compel them to break and run.

Before we can do this, however, we have a long way to go. At the present moment we have got to traverse an area which is too far away from the enemy to allow us to use our rifles with effect, so that our immediate object is to get over the ground in front as rapidly as possible and without losing more men than we can help, so as to get close enough to use our rifles against the enemy and commence to break down his resistance with our bullets.

We will suppose that there are large patches of open

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ground in front of us, which the enemy can see from his position and which he can fire upon with his artillery. We cannot avoid these open patches, because we are taking part in an extensive attack, there are many other companies right and left of us, and if each company changes its original direction of advance and seeks a more covered approach, great confusion will result and large masses of troops will be collected in a disorganized body in this covered area Draw on the blackboard a long line of companies advancing, draw a wood or a series of low hills in front of the centre of the line, and show by arrows the companies right and left of the covered approach moving into it, and explain the confusion which would follow.

Having reached the end of this covered approach the companies would have to deploy under very effective hostile artillery fire, and possibly exposed also to the enemy's infantry fire. The deployment would be conducted in extremely difficult circumstances, and attended by far more loss than if the companies had advanced in suitable formation across the open ground. The actual companies that happened to be opposite the covered approach would have some advantage over the others, but they would not have to deploy and move to a flank when reaching the far end of the cover, because they are already deployed and will simply move forward, straight to their front to continue the attack directly they leave the cover. If there was a covered approach the far end of which was concealed, or covered, from the enemy's artillery and infantry fire, and the deployment from the far end could also be made under cover, there would be no object in deploying earlier, this stage of the attack would be unnecessary and would be omitted, because the attacking force could get within effective rifle range of the enemy before deploying.

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Let us be quite clear as to what we want to do during this stage of the attack, and what the enemy can do to hinder or stop us. First we will consider the ground. Some of it will be open and exposed to the enemy's artillery fire, and some of it will be hidden from his view and merely exposed to badly-aimed artillery fire, or what is called "searching" fire, but which is rarely very effective. The result is that during this stage of the attack our company will be advancing, sometimes over open and exposed ground and sometimes over ground which is hidden from the enemy's view and fire. It is evident that we want to get forward as rapidly as possible, because, apart from the great advantage of rapidity and vigour in the attack, which alarms the enemy quite as much as our bullets and shells, if we take half an hour crossing a piece of ground exposed to the enemy's artillery fire we shall remain under that fire for half an hour, and if we take ten minutes to traverse the same area we shall be exposed to fire for ten minutes only. In the first case we are bound to lose more men than in the second case, and our object is to get forward without losing any more men than we can possibly help.

The next question we must ask is, "What is to prevent us from getting forward rapidly?"

There are two causes: first we must not exhaust the men at this early stage of the fight by too rapid an advance, because if we do they will not be in the best possible condition to continue the fight when they are close enough to the enemy to use their rifles. Secondly, the enemy's artillery fire is apt to stop us, because if, when we are crossing an exposed area, the sky above us suddenly becomes full of bursting shells it is the natural inclination of the ordinary human being to lie down and wait until the fire slackens. This means loss of time, and, as will appear later, it is just what the enemy's

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gunners want us to do, because we give them a stationary target to shoot at. It is hard enough to hit a moving man with a rifle, but it is still harder for the artillery to burst shells in the right place so as to hit a constantly advancing body of infantry who have arranged their formation so as to present a difficult target to the enemy's guns.

The result of this discussion, so far, appears to be that the company must halt occasionally to rest the men, that when possible it must select halting-places which are not exposed to the enemy's artillery fire, that it must advance as rapidly as possible over places which are exposed to his fire, and that it must resist the temptation to lie down if, suddenly, it comes under a burst of artillery fire. Therefore, the company must move at the double over exposed ground, and walk, or halt if necessary in order to rest the men, when reaching covered ground. This settles the question of pace.

The use of the weapon, rifle or bayonet, does not require consideration, because the company is too far away from the enemy's position to fire with effect. The only matter left for us to consider is the question regarding the formation the company is to adopt during this stage of the attack. We must select a formation which is the most difficult for the enemy's artillery to deal with, and which at the same time permits of the immediate use of the rifle if the situation changes, and the enemy appear within rifle range.

The only way to reach a sound conclusion in this matter is to discover what is an easy target for artillery and what is a difficult one. It is a simple matter to write down a list of easy and difficult targets, but the mere statement would not carry much conviction, and it is better for us to understand thoroughly why one target is easier for artillery than another. We can

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only do this by gaining some knowledge as to how artillery is worked, and the difficulties which must be overcome by the gunners before producing effective fire on any target. Every endeavour has been made to render the following explanation as simple as possible, but if it is considered too difficult for the recruit to understand, or that it is undesirable, at this stage of his training, to burden his brain with too much detail, it can be omitted. It appears to be important, however, that the trained soldier should understand the reasons why we select certain formations, and he cannot understand this properly unless he is given a few simple details regarding the action of artillery.

We will endeavour, so far as circumstances permit, to compare the use of the gun with the use of the rifle. The gun is moved into position by a team of six horses; once in position it can be served more or less continuously without great danger of its being knocked out, even if exposed to a heavy artillery and infantry fire, especially if the ammunition can be brought up under cover, because the gun has got a shield behind which the gunners can take cover. The rifle is moved into position by the individual infantry soldier; if he is knocked out, the rifle is put out of action as well, because there is no one to fire it. On the other hand, there is no immediate difficulty as regards ammunition supply, because the infantry soldier carries a good deal (150 to 200 rounds) in his pouches and haversack. The gun can be fired directly over the sights, like the rifle, the proper range and elevation of the backsight in each case having been obtained beforehand by a rangefinder. The accuracy of the fire of the gun, as regards direction and elevation, but apart from the burst of the shell, depends upon the accuracy of the range obtained and the correctness of the gunner who puts up the sight and aims the gun. The

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accuracy of the rifle depends upon exactly the same things. So far the action of the two arms is very similar, except that slightly different means are employed to gain the same ends. The gun being dragged by horses instead of being carried by the man and the artillery ammunition being carried in waggons instead of on the man.

We now come to a series of great differences in the circumstances and action of the gunner as compared with the infantry soldier, most of which render the effective service of the gun more difficult than that of the rifle. The first great difference is that the shell bursts and emits a small cloud of smoke which can be seen by the battery commander, whereas the rifle bullet goes into the ground, and unless it hits on a dusty track cannot be seen by any one. The natural conclusion to arrive at from this is that the gunner has a great advantage over the infantry soldier, because by seeing where his shell bursts he can correct his range; we shall see later, however, that unless the gunner could see the burst of his shell he could never produce effective fire at all. The only conclusion we could draw for the minute is that it might be a good thing if we had a small gun in the company which fired a shell that burst on striking the ground and emitted a puff of smoke from which the range could be ascertained—this would be far more effective than any rangefinder.

The next point of difference between the infantry soldier and the gunner is that the former fires a bullet which he intends shall hit directly one of the enemy, whilst the gunner fires a large shell which weighs nearly twenty pounds and contains over three hundred bullets. The gunner does not want to hit one man with this shell; it would kill him all right, but it would be a waste of energy: he wants the shell to explode, let loose the

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bullets it contains, and hit a number of men. If the shell explodes when it hits the ground it does very little damage, because there is only enough powder inside the shell to break the case and not sufficient to send the bullets flying in all directions with the velocity required to damage seriously any one standing at a distance. A few bullets or splinters might hurt some one close by, but the effect would be very slight. It is evident, therefore, that the shell must explode in the air, because the velocity of the bullets does not depend upon the bursting charge inside the shell, but upon the rate the shell is flying through the air at the moment when it explodes. Even so the bullets which are let loose are round, and consequently cannot overcome the resistance of the air like an elongated rifle bullet; they soon lose their velocity, and if one of the enemy's shells burst two hundred yards in front of a soldier, and one of the bullets hits him, it will not do him any great damage, because it has not got sufficient velocity left to penetrate his clothes and his skin. A soldier, therefore, is practically safe two hundred yards away from a shell which bursts directly in front of him, and this is a point we must remember when we come to discuss the formations we are to adopt during this stage of the fight.

To return to the gunner: if his shell must burst in the air to produce any serious effect, it must burst exactly in the right place; that is to say, it must burst less than two hundred yards away from the target, and far enough from the target for the bullets to spread out so as to cover a wide area and hit a number of men. The only method of doing this that has yet been discovered is to place what is called a time-fuse inside the shell. This time-fuse burns at a certain fixed rate, and all that it is necessary to do is to calculate the range, ascertain the time that it will take for the shell to fly from the muzzle

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of the gun to the place where it is required to burst, and set the fuse so as to burn for that length of time. This, however, is nothing like so simple as it looks. To begin with, the shell, when 3500 yards from the muzzle of the gun, is travelling through the air at the rate of about 300 yards a second, so that a mistake of one second in setting the fuse would make a difference of 300 yards in the place where it bursts. The density of the atmosphere affects the rate at which the fuse burns, and also, to a slight extent, the resistance offered to the shell during its passage through the air. For example, a shell fired at a range of 3500 yards with the barometer standing at 31 will not burst until it has travelled about 120 yards beyond the place where it would burst if fired at the same range with the barometer at 29.

Most of these calculations are done automatically, but there are two which cannot be automatic: one is the range and the other is the barometer, and the gunners can only ascertain these with sufficient accuracy by trial shots. It may be asked why it is necessary for the gunners to be so accurate? The infantry soldier cannot see where his bullet goes and is rarely able to check the accuracy of his shooting. This is frequently true, especially as regards the range, but if the range is correct small inaccuracies in elevation and direction on the part of the infantry soldier, provided always they are small, are not vital, because a squad of men will cover with bullets a small area occupied by the enemy and some of them are fairly certain to take effect, whereas if the shell bursts in the wrong place twenty pounds of metal, which have been drawn on to the battlefield by horses which have to be fed, driven and looked after by men who also require rations, are absolutely wasted. Ten infantry soldiers would have to fire off thirty rounds apiece to expend as many bullets as are thrown out by one shell.

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The next question for us to consider is the method adopted by the gunner to arrive rapidly at effective fire by means of these trial shots. We, as infantry soldiers, want to know this so that we can judge how long it will take a hostile battery, which has just commenced to fire at us, to do us any serious harm. Briefly speaking, the gunner ascertains the range with his range-finder, discovers the length of fuse which is required for this range from a range table, and judges the correction required for the state of the atmosphere. He then adds 150 yards on to his range and fires a round with one gun, deducts 150 yards from his range and fires a second round from another gun. If he sees one shell burst short of the target and the other burst over, he knows at once that he has got the range within 300 yards. He then reduces his longer range by 100 yards and increases his shorter range by 100 yards, and if he again finds that one shell bursts beyond the target and one short of the target, he knows that he has got the range within 100 yards. By reducing his longer range 50 yards and increasing his shorter range 50 yards he will get effective fire at once. It is easy to understand that if both shells burst short or both burst over, or if the burst of one of the shells is not observed, the operation must be recommenced from the point where this failure occurred, the result being that more time elapses before effective fire is obtained.

As it is very difficult to estimate the exact length of fuse required when ranging with time-fuses the gunner sometimes begins by firing with percussion fuses, which means that the time part of the fuse is not employed but the shell bursts directly it touches the ground. It is much easier to locate the exact position of the shell when it bursts on the ground, just the same as it is much easier to tell the exact position of a crow when it is

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standing on the ground than when it is flying above, consequently it is easier to get the correct range in this manner. Sometimes, if the ground falls behind the target, this method is not suitable, because when a shell, which goes over, strikes the ground its burst is not seen. The same applies to ground which falls in front of a target and is hidden from the gunner by an intervening ridge or wood. This is one of the reasons why a commanding position is advantageous for a battery commander to observe from, because he can see a great deal more of the ground than he can when he is placed low down. When this method of ranging is adopted, after getting the correct range, it is still necessary to ascertain the correct fuse, and this can only be obtained by further trial shots, because so far the shells have been bursting on the ground and they must burst in the correct place in the air to do the enemy any serious damage.

Having once got the correct range and fuse the gunner can commence and continue firing at the same target with all the guns of his battery without further difficulty, merely ordering any slight corrections which become necessary. The infantry soldier differs in this respect, because either he or the enemy are constantly moving forwards or backwards, and it is necessary for him to alter his range every time that movement takes place. He is not troubled, however, with the difficulties of a fuse.

The gunner has no difficulty as regards the direction of his fire, because the exact target has been pointed out to the man who is laying the gun and he can aim the gun in a moment. The chief difficulty is to arrange so that the fuse acts exactly at the right moment.

Situations arise frequently in war when it is undesirable to bring the guns into an open position here

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the gunners can certainly see the target but where the enemy's artillery can also see them, especially when they are driving up to come into action. If the enemy's artillery anticipate that a target, either of infantry or artillery, is likely to appear in a certain locality they will obtain the exact range and fuse beforehand, and directly the target appears it will be subject to a tremendous artillery bombardment. If our guns come into action in this locality a great number of the horses will be killed, and it will be difficult, subsequently, to keep the guns supplied with ammunition, because the latter is very heavy, and if it has to be carried up by hand the supply is not sufficient for rapid fire and the advantages of the quick-firing gun are lost.

On such occasions, and especially when it is very important to be able to move the battery later on, the guns come into action in a covered position behind a hill where they cannot see the target, but where they can fire at it over the top of the rise in front. This at once increases the difficulty of ranging, although when the ranging is once completed the fire of the whole battery is probably more accurate than when each gun is being aimed direct on the target by its own gunner. Perhaps this difficulty will be understood more easily if we compare the gun with the rifle. We will suppose that a section of infantry is required to fire from a position behind the crest of a hill at an enemy entrenched some nine hundred yards away. The first matter to settle would be the exact direction in which each man was to fire: this could be done by each man going out beyond the crest and placing a stick in the ground; he must then retire to the crest and place another stick in the ground in line with the first stick and the target. If he again retires a short distance, keeping the first stick in sight, he can plant a third stick in line with the first two. The last two sticks will

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then be visible from the firing point, and every soldier by getting exactly behind and in line with his own pair of sticks can aim at the sticks and be quite sure that the direction of his fire is correct.

The gunner does exactly the same thing, except that he has certain instruments to help him. The battery commander has what is called a director. He points one arm of this director at the target and the other arm at some conspicuous and distant object on the flank of the battery, which can be seen by every gun detachment in the battery.

He reads off the angle and gives it to the battery. Each gun has a telescopic sight, which is set at the angle ordered, and the gun is then swung round until the telescope of the sight is on the aiming point. When this is done the gun is pointing in the direction of the target.

We will now return to the infantry soldier. He knows the range and he knows the direction, and yet he is unable to fire so as to hit the enemy because he does not know whether to aim his rifle at the top of the stick in front of him or halfway down or at the bottom. Suppose he is firing with miniature cartridge at a range of nine hundred yards, and there is one target at the top of the wall in front of him and another at the foot. If he aims at the higher target his rifle will be held at a different angle with the horizontal than if he aims at the lower target. We might measure this angle and put a small instrument on each rifle, adjust it to the required angle, and, when the bubble is stationary in the middle of the level, fire off the rifle. Such a method would be quite out of the question with a rifle which is held in a man's hands, but it is the only way in which accurate fire can be obtained from behind cover.

With a gun it is quite possible, in fact easy, to adopt

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this system, chiefly because the gun is firmly fixed on the ground and remains stationary, whereas a rifle could not be held continuously in one position unless it was fixed in a vice, when it could be treated in exactly the same way as a gun. A level is placed on each gun, and it is quite easy for the gunners to give the required elevation by this level. So we see that, in addition to the ordinary difficulties of ranging, the gunner, when he is firing from behind cover, must also arrange for the direction of fire of each gun and the angle of elevation; and this adds to the time which must elapse before effective fire can be obtained.

We have already seen that the enemy's artillery may have recognized certain localities where it appears likely that a target will appear, and will have obtained the correct range and fuse for these localities, so that directly the target appears they can at once open a heavy and effective fire upon it. This being the case it is desirable for us to ascertain the type of locality which the enemy's gunners would be likely to select for this purpose, so that we may be prepared for them beforehand, and pass them as rapidly as possible. A clump of trees and the edge of a wood are excellent objects for artillery to range upon, and even if they have not obtained the range and fuse previously they can do so very rapidly with such a range mark, because they can see clearly every shell that bursts beyond the clump, and every one that bursts on the near side, the smoke of the shell showing up very plainly on either side of the clump. With a small object, on flat ground, it is frequently very difficult to observe where the shell burst with reference to the object. In the case of a wood the shells that burst inside cannot be seen, but those which burst short are clearly visible as such, so that by increasing the range of a short shell the edge of the wood can be reached with absolute accuracy. Any object

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that is fairly isolated and which stands well up, like a building, haystack, &c., forms a good mark for ranging. These, therefore, are the localities which infantry should avoid; but if, as usually occurs, this is out of the question, they should be passed as rapidly as possible.

We have now ascertained two important points as regards our infantry advance; the first is that it takes some time, from five minutes to a quarter of an hour, for a battery to produce effective fire on any particular locality, unless they have already ranged on that locality. Secondly, there are certain localities which are easier than others for artillery to range on.

We must now consider what formation is best for artillery to deal with. We have already seen that a stationary target is naturally the best, because no change of range or fuse in necessary, and, if that stationary target is parallel to the front of the battery, the guns can switch their fire to the right and left of the target just as easily as an infantry soldier can turn his rifle towards the right or left, and without any change of range or fuse. If, however, the target is not parallel to the front of the battery, but one end of it is two hundred yards nearer than the other end, the guns firing on the nearer portion of the target would have to fire with a different range and fuse to those firing upon the further portion, which would introduce complications and might slightly disturb the effect of the fire. In any case, the target still being in one long line, it would not be difficult for the gunners to produce good results.

Directly this line advances, the gunners must change their fuse and range if they are to continue to produce effective fire on that target. Accuracy in this respect depends entirely upon whether the gunners can estimate correctly the distance that the infantry have advanced, or whether the infantry are approaching a second locality,

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which the gunners have already ranged upon, or which it is easy to range on with great rapidity. In the first case the fire of the enemy's guns is likely to lose a good deal of its effect; in the second case, there should be little delay before their fire is again effective.

The important point appears to be that any form of line is not suitable for an infantry advance during this stage of the fight. If we are not to move in line the only alternatives are columns or groups of men in close order scattered over the ground. It is essential for us to maintain order and cohesion, because at any moment we may be called upon to deploy a firing line, and then everything must be ready to produce an immediate and effective fire. In any case, when we have completed this stage of the attack, and have approached sufficiently close to the enemy to use our rifles with effect, and consequently to come under his infantry fire, a deployment will be necessary, and that deployment must be in a general line, otherwise there will be gaps in our attack and, in consequence, a loss of fire effect.

There are many military authorities who consider that a group formation should be adopted, and that these groups should be so placed with reference to each other that no one hostile shell could damage more than one group. If we assume that a company at war strength is 120 strong, and if we divide that company into four sections, each section in column of fours will occupy on the ground a space of about four yards by fifteen. Taking the front of attack of this company at a hundred yards, which would only give four hundred yards for the battalion, and the depth at four hundred yards, namely, to the leading men of the company following in reserve, we can place four little rectangles anywhere we like in this area and see what they look like in plan. They certainly appear inviting, and should form a very difficult

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target for the artillery, who could not hope to make such accurate shooting as to try to aim at any one of these groups, especially if the guns are firing indirect. It may be argued from this that the enemy's artillery would see a lot of groups advancing and would fire into the "brown" of them, trusting to one lucky shell nearly annihilating one section.

What we have to consider is whether our attack is more likely to be hampered or damaged by the practical certainty of a few men in every part of an extended line being knocked over at intervals by the enemy's shrapnel, or by the extreme probability of ten or twenty men in one section being killed or wounded by a lucky shell here and there. In the one case the casualties are general but slight throughout every section, and in the other case there is little doubt that many sections would get forward without seeing a single man hit. In other words, will the moral of the attack be more likely to suffer in line formation than in group formation? It is probable that, owing to the difficult nature of the target, the group formation would suffer fewer casualties than the line formation, but no doubt the unfortunate groups that happened to receive the full charge of a shrapnel shell would think that the formation adopted was an extremely bad one. On the other hand, those small columns that did not happen to enter the bursting zone of a shrapnel would consider the formation eminently suited to this stage of the attack, and would enter the second stage with additional confidence.

There is little doubt that it is easier to maintain the general direction of the advance with the group formation than when the sections are extended in line. It is possible to take advantage of cover and to negotiate serious obstacles with comparative ease. As regards visibility from the enemy's guns, it appears to be much

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easier to see a line of men advancing than small groups scattered about in some echelon formation. For example, each company might have one section marching in fours along the left line of direction of the company. The next section might be echeloned in rear, a hundred yards from the first section and fifty yards to its right. The third section might be directly behind the leading section and following two hundred yards in its wake, the fourth section being two hundred yards in rear of the second section and directly behind it. By this means the depth of the company would not exceed three hundred yards, and the leading section of the company following in reserve, in a similar formation, would then be four hundred yards from the leading section of the front company. In the four-company battalion exactly the same procedure could be adopted, except that each company would have double the front of attack, and instead of grouping complete sections it would be better to divide them from front to rear in half sections. The whole company would then appear on the ground in exactly the same formation as two companies, side by side, in an eight-company battalion.

There does not appear to be sufficient evidence to enable us to lay down definitely that the group formation is greatly superior to the line formation, and no doubt many officers who prefer the line formation will adhere to it. The great point to remember is, that whatever formation we decide upon, the one object is to get the attack through this stage as rapidly as possible and with the least avoidable loss. It is essentially an artillery stage of the fight, and as we have considered what the enemy's artillery can do, we must now discover how our own artillery can help us, and this leads us to an interesting inquiry as to the comparative power of artillery in the attack and defence. It is worth our

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while as infantry soldiers to understand this, because it provides one more reason why the attack is so much better than the defence.

Attacking artillery have a stationary target frequently on commanding ground which it is not difficult to locate, whereas defending artillery have a moving target, usually on low ground, which it is not always easy to see. Attacking artillery have only one target during this stage of the fight, and that target is the enemy's guns, who alone can damage the attacking infantry who are pushing forward to win the battle. Defending artillery have two targets, the attacking infantry and the guns that are supporting their advance.

The attacking guns, having a stationary target, can fire indirect, and for that reason it is extremely difficult for the enemy's guns to deal with them. Defending artillery, or part of it, must, as a rule, come forward where the guns can fire direct, otherwise there will be so much dead ground, as regards artillery fire, in front of the defender's position, that during the final stages of the battle superiority of fire should be obtained without great difficulty by the combination of attacking artillery and infantry as opposed to infantry alone. The reason for the existence of this dead ground is because the defender's gun, to conceal completely the flash of the discharge, must be thirteen feet below the crest of the hill in front, presumably the position held by the defender's infantry. The muzzles of the guns cannot be depressed below the crest of the hill, because the shells would hit the hill and do no one any harm except the defenders. Even if a position is available some six hundred to a thousand yards in rear of this crest, there is still a good deal of ground which is dead to the defending guns beyond the crest. In the defence, therefore, the guns must be placed forward if they are to produce really effective support to the

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defending infantry during the later stages of the fight, and if they are placed forward they become an excellent mark to the attacking artillery, even though they may be entrenched.

Another advantage which the attacking artillery possess over the defence is that the former can disperse their guns and concentrate their fire much more than is possible on the defence. The latter are tied down, practically, to the position which they have selected for defence, whereas the attacker has the whole country to the front and flanks of the defender's position where he can dispose his guns.

We see, therefore, from the infantry point of view, that during this stage of the attack we are opposed only by hostile artillery, that our own artillery, gun for gun, will have an advantage over them, and, in consequence, the enemy will not have it all their own way when trying to interfere with our advance. Our object must be to cross any area exposed to the enemy's artillery fire as rapidly as possible, halting in any place which gives cover from view and taking advantage of any temporary cessation of artillery fire to rush over an exceptionally exposed piece of ground. By this means we shall escape a number of casualties, and we shall thereby add to the confidence of the men. We shall keep them fresh for the decisive fight which is now approaching, and we shall have accomplished our object in bringing to the second stage of the attack a company which is in the best possible trim for further success.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE SECOND STAGE OF THE ATTACK

THE ADVANCE WHEN WITHIN RIFLE RANGE OF THE DEFENDERS

THE commencement of this stage of the attack is clearly marked by the sound of the enemy's rifle bullets and by the desire on the part of the men to return their fire. The section commanders must now exert every effort to get their men forward, even if only for a hundred yards, without returning the fire. One of the few advantages the defence possesses over the attack is the facility for supplying almost unlimited rifle ammunition to the firing line. Ammunition in the defence can be placed in the trenches in large quantities, and therefore the defenders can afford to use long range fire much more than the attackers. There is, however, a compensating moral advantage for the attack, because the defenders see that their fire is producing little or no effect upon the attack, which is pressing forward as vigorously as ever and has not even condescended to return their fire. Every round of ammunition fired by the attack has to be carried forward by the men themselves, because it is only in exceptional cases that a sufficient quantity of ammunition, to affect materially the supply, can be brought up to the firing line when once it is committed to the attack. Of course every effort will be made to bring forward the company pack-horses carrying the ammunition, but the pack-

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horse and his driver are just as likely to be hit as any one else, especially if the ground has been, and is still, exposed to the enemy's fire; whereas if not there is no occasion to use ammunition at this stage of the attack, because ground can be gained to the front without firing a shot.

If, when first experiencing the enemy's infantry fire, there is an open bit of ground just in front of the company, and beyond that a small valley or other cover, let us use every endeavour to rush the sections forward to that cover before opening fire. Our casualties will be less because we have not delayed to fire, and if we can cheat the enemy of a few hundred yards of ground at this period of the attack we shall have all the more prospect of success later on.

The first sound of the enemy's bullets will be our signal for deployment, because we cannot afford to come within effective rifle range of the enemy in any column formation, where one bullet might place two or more men out of action. The real business of the infantry attack now commences; our object is to advance as rapidly as possible until we can get close enough to bring such an effective fire to bear on the defenders that they will be unable to use their rifles with sufficient accuracy to prevent us from gaining superiority of fire. This last means that three-quarters of the battle is won, but not all, because we have not completed our task until we have driven the enemy from his ground and compelled him to retreat; we can only do this by delivering an assault upon his position.

We still wish to husband the energies of our men, so we must endeavour to find resting-places under cover after a long rush to enable the men to regain their breath. Above all, we must find the best fire positions available, and apart from all questions of effective fire there is a

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very good reason for this. We are a very short time advancing, we are, or we ought to be, a very short time halting under cover for breath, but we are much longer when we halt to fire. If an estimate could be made of the comparative losses when advancing from fire position to fire position and when halted in a fire position it would be found, most probably, that the greater number occur during the latter period. The logical conclusion is that we ought never to halt to fire, but logic has not much place in battle, where human nature dominates most things, from the general to the proverbial drummer-boy with a bullet through his bugle.

It is essential, therefore, that our section and group commanders, and the men themselves, should be highly trained to select the best fire positions available. This being the case we must consider which are good and which are bad; and as this depends entirely upon the small features of the ground and any artificial cover which we may encounter, and as these vary so constantly in shape, it appears impossible to attempt to classify them and arrive at any definite conclusions as to the best position to select in any particular case. We will, however, attempt to deal with a few which are most commonly met with, and a study of these may help us with others.

We can dismiss in a few words what may be described as the obvious fire positions, although to watch troops at training one could not say that they are always recognized. Such positions are just behind the crest of a ridge, behind a bank of any kind, or a fold in the ground.

A hedge without any cover from fire is not a good fire position, because it is such an easy mark for the enemy's rifles and guns, and also because it is not an easy position to advance out of; in fact, a hedge is really an obstacle

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to the attack and will be dealt with under that heading. Its chief advantage in the attack is that it covers the ground in rear of it from the enemy's view, and, if the ground rises slightly behind the hedge, or the enemy's position is on high ground in front, a good fire position can be found a short distance in rear on the open ground, where the men lying down can just see over the top of the hedge but are themselves hidden by its upper branches.

A bank by a road is an obvious fire position, but it is also a very good mark for the enemy's fire. If there is a bank and ditch on both sides the far side is better than the near side, because the enemy's infantry will certainly fire at the road itself, and bullets which strike on the road will richochet, whereas bullets which hit the ground in front of the forward bank will disappear. It is also a good thing when two fire positions are very close together to occupy the furthest forward at once, otherwise there may be two halts in the advance instead of one and every unnecessary halt should be avoided. The same remark applies to a railway cutting; the fire position should be on the enemy's side if possible, whether the ground slopes up or down hill.

Any form of building or enclosure, such as a village, farm, cottage, &c., is a bad fire position in the attack. It is easy to get into, but very difficult to get out of; it is frequently exposed to hostile artillery fire and the casualties inside it are much heavier than out in the open. A skyline is popularly supposed to be a very bad fire position, but it is doubtful if it is as bad as people make out. To begin with it is extremely difficult to know what is a skyline and what is not, because if we go to the foot of a hill and get a man on the hill to put in a stick exactly on the skyline and then walk some two hundred yards away from the hill and get the man to put in another we shall find it is much further back. If we

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then climb another hill opposite and when halfway up have another stick planted on the skyline, and finally have one placed on the skyline as it appears to us from the top of the hill, we shall find that there are skylines every yard over the slope of the hill, according to the observer's position beyond. If when approaching what appears to be a skyline, we creep up the hill until we can just see to fire at the enemy over the top we shall present a very small target, which will not be easy for the enemy to hit. It is probable that the avoidance of skylines is more important in the defence than in the attack, and they will be discussed again under that heading.

Bushes and undergrowth afford excellent fire positions, because they conceal the attack, although they provide no cover from fire. They frequently have no clearly defined border, and consequently they do not present an easy target. The chief difficulty is that they are not always easy to fire out of, because the view is interfered with by bushes in front. If the bushes cover a hill the forward crest is an excellent fire position; in fact, good fire positions, especially for covering fire, can be found anywhere down the slope of the hill, where the men can see over the bushes but are not themselves exposed.

It occurs frequently that the attack has to advance down a long slope facing the enemy's position; it is important, therefore, to decide which is the best part of this slope to occupy as a fire position, excluding any obvious fire position such as a bank, scrub, &c. The enemy's fire is more likely to be directed at the top of the slope than at any other part of it, because it is a good line to aim at; his fire over the forward crest is more sweeping than it is lower down the hill, because the slope is not so steep. It appears, therefore, that we should endeavour to get over the crest and well down the slope in one rush, and then occupy fire positions as

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required until the foot of the slope is reached. The actual foot of a hill, in open ground, where the slope changes, is not such a good fire position as one further up the hill in rear, because the change of slope usually causes a change of light, when observed from the enemy's position, and this gives a good general line to aim at. If there is cover at the foot of the slope, and also a good fire position, it is best to reach the foot as rapidly as possible in order to provide covering fire for the sections that are following. If there is no fire position at the foot of the slope, but plenty of cover, a fire position should be occupied on the slope to help those in rear by means of covering fire. It is satisfactory to know that when traversing a slope of the above nature the enemy's rifle and artillery fire is less effective than on level ground, because it is more plunging.

A great part of the advance during this stage of the attack may have to be conducted over ground which is practically featureless, in which case the object will be to gain ground to the front as rapidly as possible, assisted by intense covering fire. The length of the forward rushes will depend chiefly on the human element, which can only be ascertained by the section or group commander on the spot. The most important details are to get the men to rise together, to get them forward in one extended line without stragglers, and to form a level firing line at the end of the rush. If the enemy is looking out for rushes, as we may presume he is, he will open fire directly he sees the men get up or very soon afterwards. He will not know what part of the attacking line is going to make the next rush, and if the advance is preceded by rapid covering fire he may be keeping his head down at the moment. In any case there will be a few seconds before any fire which is directed specially at the advancing group or section

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will have serious effect, and these seconds should be made the most of. The men should be taught that the devil in the shape of a bullet is apt to catch the hindermost, and that if all jump up together the whole operation will take a much shorter time than if the men straggle forward one after the other, when the casualties are certain to be heavier than in the first case. This is greatly a matter of drill in peace time, and if properly instilled will become a habit, which will materially assist the attack in war.

When the attack is made over very broken ground with small undulations and confused ridges and mounds it is liable to lose its cohesion, because although there are many excellent fire positions they are so small that only a few men can occupy them, and the remainder of the group or section will be compelled to lie out in the open. The usual result is that sections and groups get very mixed up, and both fire control and leading generally become difficult. For example, we will suppose that a section commander has got his section fairly together, and is just signalling or indicating with his arm certain of these small localities for each of his group commanders to reach, when he finds another section on his right or left has occupied one or more of these localities with their men, and that he is being squeezed out of the fight. In this event the only thing for him to do is to form a small support with part of his section and lead forward the remainder; by this means he keeps his section intact, and as soon as opportunity offers he can bring up his rear groups on his right or left. Meanwhile, if the ground permits, that part of the section which is in rear can provide covering fire for those in front.

A single small hill or knoll encountered in the line of attack of a company is frequently disconcerting. It is

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very satisfactory for the section that happens to strike the centre of it, because it affords a good fire position for that section. Unfortunately, however, its value in that respect, and also on account of the cover it provides, exercises a powerful magnetic influence on the human nature composing the other sections, with the result that the greater part of the company will crowd into it. If it is possible to recognize such a feature in front, it would be well for the company commander to direct the nearest section to occupy it as a fire position before the other sections advance, and then to direct the remainder of the company to move past each flank of it and occupy the best fire position available beyond it, covered by the fire of the leading section. By this means the danger of the whole company crowding behind the knoll might be reduced.

It is a great mistake to shut our eyes to human nature in battle and imagine that every one is going to do exactly what he is told, because confusion and crowding are bound to occur sooner or later, and the later we can make it the better.

Anything in the nature of a quarry or gravel pit, though affording possibly a good fire position for a few men, is disastrous when occupied by a large number, and though it is frequently quite easy to jump down into it and reach temporary safety it is extremely difficult to climb out of it on the far side and continue the attack. The best thing to do, when possible, is for the section or company that strikes it to occupy a fire position behind it and thus provide covering fire for the forward movement of other companies or sections right and left of it. This will at least prevent men from getting into it, because they cannot pass in front of the section which is firing behind it. Even during peace training men crowd into such localities, and the situation will be much worse in war.

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Whenever a company or section reaches covered ground and has halted to reform or take breath, it is of vital importance that a fire position should be occupied to the front at the earliest possible moment. There are two reasons for this: first, because during an attack it is impossible to say when the enemy may deliver a counter-stroke, and he may suddenly occupy a fire position just in front and bring the attack in this locality to a stand-still; secondly, other sections or companies may be advancing on the flanks over perfectly open ground, and it will be of the greatest assistance to them to find that a fire position has been occupied in advance of their flank, and will encourage them to press forward. It can be laid down as a definite rule in the attack that when any part of it reaches cover that part should press on and occupy a fire position at the far end. There is little danger of getting isolated, and even that risk is well worth taking in order to encourage the remainder of the attack to press forward over exposed ground.

The fire position which does not run parallel to the front of the attack is always a source of trouble and frequently leads to loss of direction. It is generally to be found in the form of a bank, hedge, or ridge, or the border of a wood, and sometimes it is enfiladed from the defenders' position. If such a fire position can be recognized before it is actually occupied, it is essential for company and section commanders to take special steps to avoid the mistakes which are likely to arise. The company commander should note the true direction of his attack, and should be prepared to handle his sections in order to maintain that direction. This may necessitate the withdrawal, by a temporary halt, of one section from the firing line, or even the loss of one section which, by the direction it has taken, has got mixed up with another company on the flank. It is impossible to say how each

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section should be handled without studying a definite example on the ground, where the least fold might throw the scale in favour of one course of action rather than another. Whatever the ground may be like, there are, however, a few principles which can be employed with success. The first of these is that every effort should be made to prevent the firing line from occupying a fire position which is enfiladed by the enemy; the reason for this is obvious. The second principle is to occupy first that portion of the fire position which is nearest to the enemy. The third principle is not to occupy the remainder of the fire position at all, or, if human nature is too strong to prevent this, occupy it for as short a time as possible.

The reason for the second principle is, that if the further portion of the position is occupied first, there will be a natural tendency on the part of the attack to pass the remainder of the position and come up in line with the leading section or group. Whereas if the nearest portion is occupied first, it is practically certain that the men who are holding it will stay there until other troops come up on their outer flank; and these other troops, with equal certainty, will conform to the fire position and thus throw out the direction of their attack. As will be seen later, when studying the defence, there can be few more favourable localities for the delivery of a counter-stroke out of the centre of a position than over a ridge which runs diagonally from below the defenders' position to the line of the attack. Unless the greatest care is taken by the attack, it is almost certain to be struck in flank, and in any case it is likely to be enfiladed.

This applies particularly to open ground. When there are banks or scrub scattered about the ridge they form fire positions of themselves, as already noted, and the danger is not so great.

Let us take an example of an open ridge or undulation

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of ground which runs diagonally left to right from the front of the attack towards the enemy's position and falls gradually to the ordinary level some six hundred yards from that position. We will first take the case of a series of companies in the firing line which is approaching this ridge. The commander of the right company which is affected by this feature should employ every means to get his whole company forward, and facing in the right direction, at the end of the ridge nearest to the enemy. If he can do this successfully, he will probably save the whole situation. The commander of the company next to him on the left should follow his example, pass straight over the ridge and line up alongside the leading company. If he can succeed in doing this it is almost certain that the difficulty will be overcome and that the remaining companies on the left will follow suit. Meanwhile the company commanders on the left should hold back their advance until the ground has been gained beyond the ridge on their right. Failing this, they must act as though they were the right company, except that sections instead of companies would be employed; the section on the right would be pushed forward in the true direction, pass right over the ridge without occupying it as a fire position, and form a front beyond it. The remaining sections on the left will follow suit and line up on the left of the leading section.

Another type of fire position which is even more difficult to deal with is one which runs out in a V-shape with the point towards the enemy. Its effect is exactly the same as in the last case, except that the difficulties are greatly increased. If such a fire position is encountered during the early portion of this stage of the attack it is almost certain to cause a gap in the attack, because the companies or sections right and left of the point of the V will lose their direction if they once occupy the fire position,

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and when they advance they will be leading in divergent directions. An example of this type of fire position would be a low, almost semi-circular ridge with the circumference towards the enemy. It must, if possible, be treated in exactly the same manner as before, the portion nearest to the enemy should be occupied first, and failing this the part further away from the enemy should not be occupied at all.

When troops line a bank along a road, which run diagonally across the front of the attack, it is fairly easy at manœuvres, by means of a good deal of shouting, to correct the direction during the next advance; but is extremely doubtful if such means would be effective in war, and it would be best to deal with the situation in the same manner as suggested for the diagonal ridge.

The field to field fire positions are difficult to deal with, the chief compensation being that they are more difficult to defend, because the field of fire is very limited, the hedges do not everywhere run the right way for the defence, and if every company of the attack presses forward vigorously at least one company is fairly certain to strike a weak spot and penetrate the position; except in the British Isles such country is the exception and is rarely met with.

To sum up we may take it as a general rule that it is best, when possible, to occupy fire positions in rear of any small localities which the men are liable to crowd into for cover, such as gravel pits, quarries, farm enclosures, or buildings, until the rest of the attack has passed to right and left, the occupation of such localities being prevented by the fire of the section or company which is in position behind it. It may be said that the company or section occupying the fire position in rear will certainly get involved in the locality, and probably that will be the case. This probability is reduced, however, by the

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remainder of the attack having passed beyond it. In any case no other sections or companies will be drawn into the locality, and by good leading our own section or company, or the greater part of it, should be brought successfully through the ordeal.

Fire positions which run diagonally from the front of the attack towards the enemy should be occupied first at the point nearest to the enemy and the remainder, if possible, not occupied at all, or if that is beyond the powers of human nature they should be occupied only for a very short time, every effort being made to form a firing line beyond, facing in the correct direction.

Other difficulties during this stage of the attack are discussed below, when dealing with the passage of obstacles, such as hedges, woods, streams, &c., but before leaving the subject of fire positions it is desirable to consider how their selection can be facilitated by the employment of the company scouts.

Cases constantly occur when a section or group commander is compelled to make his forward rush without being able to see what kind of ground he is about to traverse. The result is that at the end of the rush the section or group may find itself in the worst possible position either for halting or for firing at the enemy, and they may suffer very heavy casualties in consequence. A case of this kind occurs most frequently when a fire position has been occupied just behind a crest, where the enemy's position can be clearly seen, but where the ground immediately in front is hidden from view by the top of the hill which the section is occupying. We also find cases occur where a group or section advances too far over a crest and occupies a fire position which is unnecessarily exposed. We naturally ask ourselves the question whether both these undesirable events would not be obviated by the use of the company scouts. There

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is no doubt that on many occasions it would be possible for the scouts to go forward and select the best fire position available, lie down in it, and wait until the section comes up. The group commanders and the men would see the scout and know they must get forward to the place where he is lying.

In very open country, and especially when the advance of the scout would mask the fire of part of the company, such methods, no doubt, would be impracticable, but there are many occasions where a scout could be used in this manner with success, and very serious losses might thereby be avoided. For example, it is a favourite scheme on the defence to place an obstacle, under effective artillery and infantry fire from the position, on the defender's side of a ridge or hill in front of the position. The attack passing over this ridge cannot see the obstacle until the firing line rushing over the crest runs right into it. If a scout could get forward on such an occasion he would give warning of the danger and steps would be taken to avoid the obstacle or destroy it. In any case it would not come as a surprise to the attack. Whenever a section is halted to rest or is advancing over covered ground one or more scouts should always be thrown well forward and remain in front until a fire position is discovered. In the case of the flank companies of an attack, special arrangements would be required to ensure that look-out men keep level with the outer flank of the company, to guard against any sudden attack by infantry or cavalry. This is necessary at all times, but especially in very close or very open country; in the case of the latter there are frequently valleys and depressions which can hide considerable bodies of men, and because the country is quite open scouting is sometimes thought to be unnecessary. In very close country, where the view rarely extends beyond the next field, the scouts

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must be constantly at work to avoid surprise and discover the position of the enemy in front.

There is one more detail as regards the occupation of fire positions which is neglected frequently: when the groups or sections reach the fire position every man should be ready to fire at once. That is to say, his sight should have been adjusted for the correct range beforehand, his magazine should have been charged, and, when possible, the target should have been pointed out. These matters can be attended to without difficulty, either just before leaving the last fire position or during a temporary halt under cover between two fire positions. By this means we can be sure that the rifles are properly sighted, and, if required, we can open rapid fire immediately we reach the new fire position.

We will now consider the action of the supports to the firing line. Each company during this stage of the attack usually provides its own support, the reserve companies following in rear under the battalion commander. It has been noted already that the number of sections that would be deployed when first coming within rifle range of the enemy would depend upon the extent of the enemy's fire, and consequently the amount of fire that was necessary to maintain the advance of the company; and on the nature of the ground, whether it was very open and exposed to the enemy's fire, when probably two sections would be deployed from the first; or whether there was a good deal of dead ground, when perhaps one section would be sufficient. As a rule, two sections deployed and two in support meet most requirements, and there is no doubt that the company is easier to handle in this formation than any other. Each section in support can follow the section in front of it, be prepared to reinforce it at any moment, or open covering fire over its head when the ground permits and the situation demands it.

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The chief difficulty that the supporting sections have to deal with is to find suitable halting-places. The firing line goes forward, advances rapidly over some very exposed ground, discovers a fire position immediately beyond, and halts to fire. The supporting sections follow, find suddenly that the firing line has halted in the only bit of cover available, and the supporting section has to lie out in the open. The company commander and the section commander should observe the ground in front very carefully, and also watch the action of the firing line, so as to prevent the support from falling into this trap. Of course, if there is any cover immediately behind the fire position occupied by the firing line, even if it is only ten yards behind, it would be best for the supporting section to gain it at once, and wait there until the firing line had again advanced.

The commander of a supporting section should always take advantage of bursts of rapid fire from the firing line or from the artillery to gain ground to the front. Before each advance he should send forward scouts to discover the best place for the section to make its next halt; and he should always have the men's rifles adjusted for the correct range, and the magazines charged, so that they can open covering fire at a moment's notice if required. The supporting sections have plenty of time and opportunity to do these things, and if properly attended to they add to the efficiency of the company as an attacking unit and save many casualties.

Commanders of supporting sections have more latitude in the selection of their line of advance than the sections in the firing line, and by adopting different formations, and taking the fullest advantage of any cover available, they should be able to follow the firing line without much loss.

On very open ground, where there is practically no

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cover from view or fire, the supporting sections should not approach within two hundred yards of the firing line until they are actually required to join it. By this means they will escape most of the infantry or artillery fire directed against the firing line.

If, as sometimes occurs, it is found that the enemy's artillery open a rapid fire whenever a target appears near a certain locality, the supporting sections should endeavour to avoid the spot; if, however, that is out of the question, they should get over the ground as rapidly as possible, and even join up with the firing line, rather than remain halted in this locality.

The company scouts of the reserve companies in rear, if not required on the flanks, should advance with the commanders of the supporting sections, so that they can be dropped or sent back with any information which is obtained which would be useful for the reserve companies: such as the progress of the firing line, the presence of obstacles in front, the most covered line of advance, localities subject to bursts of hostile artillery fire, &c.

It occurs sometimes that an attack has to be made through a wood, some part of which is defended by the enemy. Wood fighting differs materially from operations in the open, chiefly because the long range of modern weapons is useless and the artillery on either side can do little or nothing to help the infantry. The only weapons that can be used are magazine fire and the bayonet, and every effort should be made to ensure that the formations adopted are suitable for their immediate and effective action; that the magazines are charged, the sights properly adjusted to a short range, and the bayonets fixed: every one in the company must be prepared to deliver an assault with the bayonet, if possible without firing, but, failing this, to open rapid fire and assault at the earliest possible moment. A long struggle

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for the superiority of fire inside a wood can only lead to great loss; it will rarely produce decisive results, and it will absorb a number of troops out of all proportion to the extent of front occupied.

In all wood fighting the attackers should have an advantage over the defenders, because the latter cannot see what is going on to the right and left, they will be uncertain as to whether the companies on their flanks are still holding their ground, and consequently they will be nervous about the safety of their flanks and their line of retreat. The attacking troops, on the other hand, if they have been properly trained, will know that every company is pressing forward and endeavouring to assault the enemy in front of it, that the moral effect of the attack is so great that the possibility of any of the flank companies being driven back is not worthy of consideration, and that even if they are driven back the success of their own company will immediately put things right again, because the enemy's line will be penetrated.

It appears, therefore, that in cases where an attack meets a counterstroke in a wood, the first object should be to throw the latter on the defensive, and this can only be done by rushing the enemy with the bayonet. It is of vital importance to bring the matter to a decision at the earliest possible moment, and to avoid a long fire fight which, as already pointed out, is unlikely to produce any result except considerable loss of life.

Having considered the general principles on which we should work we can now turn to the details, especially as regards the formations we are to adopt. If the wood contains very thick undergrowth, it is apparent that the enemy will not select it as part of his defensive position, and, still more, that he will not deliver a counterstroke through it. It is possible, however, that he may have made a improved a clearing in some part of the wood

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and be defending the far side. It would take a very long time for a company to work its way through such a wood, but it would be safe from attack whilst engaged upon the operation, provided the usual scouts were employed in front and on the flanks of the company to guard against surprise and give notice of any clearing which was reached. The main object would be to traverse the wood in the right direction, and the company would advance in some form of column, either in fours, file or single men, according to the density of the undergrowth. Great care must be taken to avoid attacking or being attacked by another of our companies which is also moving through the wood ; in fact, the advance would be conducted on the same lines as at night.

It is probable that both the attack and defence would avoid such a wood, and even if the former were able to traverse it in the right direction and came out at a clearing which was occupied by the enemy, it would be very difficult to organize a further attack.

In cases, however, where the undergrowth is not so thick, or where there is little or none, the operation is quite feasible, although no doubt undesirable. The first essential is good scouting, because we require warning of an enemy's approach so as to get into the best formation to use our bayonets. The next essential is that we must move in formed bodies, otherwise we are certain not only to lose our direction but also a number of our men. If the undergrowth is fairly thick the whole company can move in one column, the leading section being prepared at any moment to deploy to its right, and the second section to its left, and the remaining half company to form line in rear. If the undergrowth is not very thick, and it is possible to see for thirty or forty yards to a flank, it is best to advance all four sections in fours at deploying interval, so that directly the enemy is met he

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can be charged with the bayonet. When there is no undergrowth the best formation is to deploy one section in extended order, and follow with the other three in fours at deploying interval. In such a case the enemy when met will be seen perhaps more than a hundred yards in front, the leading section will engage him with fire, pressing forward as close as possible. This will disclose the direction in which he is facing, and it may be possible to deliver an immediate assault with the three remaining sections. Failing this, the leading section should be reinforced by the whole company, superiority of fire obtained as rapidly as possible, and the enemy assaulted. Directly the assault has succeeded scouts should be sent to inform companies on the right and left, and the enemy should be pursued and prevented from making a stand until he is driven out of the wood. If this is not done hostile reinforcements may arrive, possibly drive back the attack, and the first efforts of the company will have been in vain. During this pursuit through the wood the best formation, when possible, is column of half companies in line, with scouts thrown forward as far as possible in front. These scouts if stopped by the enemy must give warning to the company and lie flat until the company comes up.

From the experience of war, the severest struggle inside a wood appears to be always on the highest ground; it is important, therefore, for every company to secure the top of any hill or ridge in front as soon as possible, because, having once gained this high ground and advanced beyond it, the resistance met with is not likely to be very severe.

Immediate attack with the bayonet, especially when an enemy is struck in flank, is the key-note of success during wood fighting; failing this it will be found that a tremendous burst of rapid fire followed immediately by

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an assault will overcome any resistance that is likely to be encountered. Every effort should be made to maintain the correct direction and to keep touch with companies on the right and left, but nothing should stop each company from pressing forward, because, although one company may fail in its assault, the enemy cannot be strong everywhere, especially in a wood, and another company will have an easier task and will succeed. If, on the other hand, every company was to wait for some other company to assault, success would never be gained.

We will now consider the best manner of dealing with any obstacles which we may encounter during this stage of the attack, and though it is impossible to include every type, we may be able to deduce a few principles which we can apply on most occasions.

Some obstacles like a stream may be exposed to the enemy's view and fire, when the attack is approaching it, when traversing it, and when emerging on the far side. These, of course, are the most difficult to deal with, especially if the obstacle is sufficiently formidable to cause serious delay in its passage. Other obstacles, such as small woods, may be covered from the view and fire of the defenders when the attack is approaching them, they may be partially exposed to fire when the attack is passing through them, and they may be exposed to a very heavy fire on the enemy's side, whilst other obstacles may not be exposed either to the view or fire of the enemy. It is of great advantage to the attack if these obstacles can be recognized beforehand, because it is then possible to arrange for adequate artillery support during their passage by the infantry. To traverse successfully an obstacle, which is exposed to the enemy's fire throughout, it is essential that at least temporary fire superiority should be obtained, which means that a very strong

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infantry firing line must be deployed in rear of the obstacle in the best fire position available and powerful artillery support provided—this artillery having only one task to perform, namely, to assist the infantry in subduing the fire which is being directed on the obstacle by the enemy. The next step in advance, which is only rendered possible by the first, is to commence building up a firing line on the far side of the obstacle. If sections can be thrown forward without masking the fire of those occupying the fire position in rear it is a great advantage, because the position evacuated by any section which goes forward can be occupied at once by a section from the supports, or even the reserve if necessary. In any case reinforcements must be pushed close up to maintain the original fire position at its full strength, and immediately take the place of the sections that are sent forward over the obstacle.

The method to be adopted by each section, when actually traversing the obstacle, depends upon the nature of the obstacle; for example, it may be a muddy stream which can be crossed without difficulty almost anywhere, or it may be a deep canal which can only be crossed at a few places, which, so far as our company is concerned, means at one place. In the first case there is no doubt that the group or section which is sent forward to establish a fire position on the far side should be extended and every man should get across the obstacle as rapidly as possible and form a firing line along with his comrades right and left of him. This group or section would be followed by another which would cross and form up on the flank of the first, and so on, until a complete firing line is established on the far side, the original fire position being maintained at its full strength, throughout, by moving up supports as required. In the second case the difficulties are much greater, especially when the

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advance has to be made on a narrow front, such as across a bridge. The enemy may have arranged for machine guns to fire on this bridge, and it will be the task of the artillery to do their utmost to discover the position of these guns and reduce or silence their fire. The only possible way of traversing such an obstacle is to assemble a group behind the passage, get the men over as rapidly as possible, and deploy them on the far side. This means that successive groups must be assembled in rear of the passage, passed across it in turn, and then move to a flank on the far side in order to form a firing line and allow room for other groups to follow behind.

As regards the assembly of groups behind the passage, it will be best to take them entirely from the supporting sections, each group occupying that portion of the original fire position, just opposite the passage, as the group in front leaves it to cross the obstacle. The passage of the obstacle itself can be done in two ways, a group of men rushing across together and extending rapidly on the far side or single men crossing one by one.

From the human nature point of view, it is probable that groups of men would cross more readily than single individuals, especially if the passage becomes encumbered with casualties. The man by man advance never seems to be a satisfactory method of getting forward in any circumstances. If five guns are placed in a ride and ten rabbits driven across the ride in a scattered bunch some of the rabbits will get over in safety. If, however, five guns are placed in the ride and single rabbits sent across it is extremely probable that every one of the rabbits will be knocked over. Another disadvantage of the man by man advance is that it takes as many times as long, to complete the operation, as there are men in each group, when the group system is adopted. For instance, if ten men can be sent over in one group, they can get over in a

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tenth of the time that would be taken by ten men crossing one by one.

The next matter to consider is the deployment on the far side. It is quite easy for the first group to go forward, extend right and left, and occupy a fire position, but the second and third group would have to move to the right and left in order to reach the flank of the first group. The fourth and fifth groups must move still further to a flank. To avoid moving to a flank more than is absolutely necessary, and to ensure that each group traverses the obstacle and reaches its proper place in the fire position in front in the shortest possible time, two matters must be attended to. The first group that crosses must double a long way to the front before lying down to fire, or if this is out of the question, they must make a second advance as soon as possible; furthermore, the leading group must not extend on the far side more than is absolutely necessary—the object should be to produce a strong firing line directly they halt and avoid the confusion of other groups getting mixed up with them. The remaining groups must thoroughly understand whether they are to incline to the right or the left when they have passed the obstacle, otherwise part will go to the right, part to the left, and a few straight on.

The vital importance of obtaining superiority of fire over the enemy during this operation is quite apparent when we really face the difficulties and realize the dangerous nature of the operation we are engaged upon.

We will now consider the case when the advance of groups or sections to the fire position in front of the obstacle masks the fire of those in rear. This condition accentuates the difficulty, because it reduces the fire effect and the only method of overcoming the increased disadvantage and maintaining the superiority of fire is by the extensive use of machine guns, and by forming, if possible,

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a second tier of fire in rear of that immediately behind the obstacle. There does not appear to be any better way of passing the obstacle and deploying on the far side than that suggested for the first case.

The next type of obstacle to study is one where the attack is covered from the enemy's view on the near side, partially exposed to fire while passing over it, and subject to a heavy bombardment on the far side. Such an obstacle might be a stream with trees and bushes along its banks, or a wood. Either of these forms an excellent mark for the enemy's artillery, and frequently for his infantry, so far as the defender's side of the obstacle is concerned.

We must first ascertain by means of the company scouts whether the obstacle itself, or any part of it, is occupied by the enemy; we must then consider the best means of traversing it; and finally discover how the company can deploy near the far edge of the obstacle and advance to continue the attack. The only means of ascertaining the best way of getting through the obstacle is by reconnoitring. This can be done by the scouts sent on well ahead of the company, or in difficult cases by the section or even the company commander. The quickest method, and speed is a great object, is to employ the scouts, because then, by the time the company comes up, the necessary information may have been obtained. It is a great mistake for a company to blunder into an obstacle without any reconnaissance having been made, because it is almost certain to lose direction in the case of a wood, or to occupy a bad fire position on the far side in the case of a stream. In addition to discovering the best way through or over the obstacle, information should be obtained first as regards any covered position which exists, facing in the correct direction, just in rear of the enemy's side of the obstacle, so that the company or section can deploy in this locality, prepara-

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tory to the forward movement to continue the attack. We must be very careful to avoid any risk of the company advancing beyond the obstacle or coming under a heavy fire near the far edge in unsuitable formation. We do not want the company to be exposed unnecessarily to the enemy's fire before everything is ready for an immediate advance.

When possible, it is a great advantage if we can fix upon any suitable fire position fifty or a hundred yards beyond the obstacle, so that the company or section may reach this position as rapidly as possible, and escape from the intense fire which is concentrated by the enemy on the edge of the obstacle. There is no doubt that the great difficulty in these cases is to get the company away from the obstacle on the far side, owing to the enemy's fire, and this difficulty is accentuated by the fact that covering fire is, as a rule, out of the question, except such covering fire as a section or group which has gone forward can provide for those behind and *vice versa*. Numerous examples have occurred in war, especially in the case of woods, where an attack has been brought to a standstill by an obstacle of this nature, the far edge having been exposed to the enemy's fire. The chief reasons for this have been, first, that too many men have been crowded into the obstacle before a fire position has been established beyond it, and, secondly, that it is extremely difficult to arrange for a simultaneous attack out of the obstacle. These two difficulties can be dealt with better at battalion or brigade training than during company training, because their correct solution involves practice with several companies. It is necessary, however, to call attention to them here so that the action of the company itself may be conducted on correct lines, and company and section commanders may understand that in their first efforts to break away from the obstacle it will be

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arranged that other companies to the right and left of them are also endeavouring to get forward, and the enemy's fire will, therefore, be dispersed and not concentrated entirely on that part of the obstacle where the company under training is located.

It may occur that special artillery support is not available to assist the company, especially when the obstacle is of no great extent and its existence was not recognized when the original dispositions were made for the attack. If the obstacle is very small, *i.e.* taking up less than fifty yards of front of the attack, it might be avoided altogether and the company which strikes it might extend right and left of it, closing in after the obstacle has been passed and when the rest of the attack has passed beyond the far edge.

Every effort should be made to prevent the enemy from discovering that the attack has reached the obstacle and is about to emerge from it. If this can be accomplished it may be possible to get half the company forward, and consequently beyond the influence of the bombardment which is specially directed at the edge of the obstacle, before that bombardment commences. The men should be taught that although the ground in front looks far more exposed than the edge of the obstacle, this is not really the case, because the defenders cannot make such elaborate arrangements for effective fire against an indefinite locality, such as the fire position our company is about to occupy in front of the obstacle, as they can against a clearly marked position such as the edge of a wood, which it is well known the attack must traverse during its advance. It is not uncommon to see a company during training occupy a fire position on the edge of a wood and engage the enemy with fire long before any advance is made by groups or sections out of the wood. The enemy then knows that the

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attack has reached the edge of the wood and is prepared not only to cause it heavy loss whilst it remains at the edge of the wood, but to turn on a very intense fire directly they see any part of the attack moving forward out of it.

Having reached a position of readiness, out of view of the enemy, and decided upon the locality beyond the obstacle which is to be occupied as the first fire position, at least half the company should be rushed out together straight into the fire position. Their magazines would be charged and the sights adjusted to the new range before starting, and, if possible, the section or group commanders will have indicated to the men the exact targets they are to fire at immediately they reach the fire position. If a fire position can be discovered inside and near the edge of the obstacle, and covering fire is possible, this position should be occupied immediately the first half of the company advances. The same arrangements being made as regards adjusting the sights of the rifles, &c., as in the case of the leading half company. The half company left at or near the edge of the obstacle would take advantage of any temporary lull in the enemy's fire to rush forward and join the men occupying the fire position in front. It always takes an appreciable time to recommence a heavy fire when it has stopped, and a few seconds' respite may turn the scale in favour of a successful advance clear of the obstacle, instead of the attack being held up at the edge. Failing this, the leading half of the company should endeavour to gain further ground to the front, and thus distract the attention of the enemy from the obstacle and afford the sections in rear an opportunity of getting clear of the obstacle. The main point appears to be that the advance from the obstacle should not be made in driblets, but by as great a number of

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men as can be moved simultaneously. In this manner the enemy's intense fire on the edge of the obstacle can only be effective for a very short time, and, therefore, with well-trained troops, who know the difficulties and dangers and how to overcome them, the damage he can do to the attack should not paralyse its advance.

The passage of an obstacle, such as a hedge, is only difficult when it does not run parallel to the front of the attack, or when it is too thick for individual men to make a gap or hole and force themselves through. During peace training we are naturally anxious not to damage our neighbour's property more than can be avoided, and consequently we treat as impassable many hedges which could be traversed without difficulty by individual men. The result is that we make for gaps when it is not absolutely necessary to do so, and thereby introduce a certain amount of false training. There are very few hedges that a man cannot get through with the aid of his entrenching tool and bayonet, and if a company is drawn up in extended order behind a hedge which is considered to be impassable, and a prize of five sovereigns offered to the first group who can get through and assemble complete in a fire position a hundred yards beyond it, no one man of the group showing himself on the enemy's side of the hedge until the whole group is ready to squeeze through and advance, it is pretty certain that the operation will not take very long and that most of the men will get through.

Unfortunately it is a different thing to make a hole through a hedge with the prospect of sharing in £5 on the far side and performing the same operation with the prospect of meeting one of the enemy's bullets. In the one case we have every individual man doing his utmost to win the prize for his group, and in the other case we have human nature doing its utmost to prevent at least

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a certain number of individuals from working with any vigour.

Bearing this in mind we will take first the case of the hedge where the ground on both sides is exposed to the enemy's fire, and where the whole of the ground in front and all the ground in rear, except a strip immediately behind the hedge, is exposed to his view. This means that either the enemy is on commanding ground in front and is looking down on to a more or less level plain or that the hedge is on a slope facing towards the enemy, otherwise the enemy could not see over the hedge. In either case the procedure appears to be the same, except that in the second case covering fire would be easier to arrange, because men occupying a fire position in rear of the hedge could fire with safety over the heads of the men who are advancing through the hedge to establish a fire position beyond it. It would be necessary to establish as strong a fire position as possible in rear of the hedge, the best locality available being chosen for the purpose, and if possible not more than fifty or sixty yards from the hedge, so that the latter could be reached from the fire position in one rush.

An attempt would then be made to obtain temporary superiority of fire over the enemy by rapid bursts, aided, if possible, by the artillery. A group from each section in the firing line would then rush forward, extended, to the edge; these men would commence immediately to work their way through the hedge, and when they had all made holes big enough to wriggle through the non-commissioned officer would give the word or signal to advance, and the group would rush forward and commence the establishment of a fire position about fifty yards beyond the hedge. The task in front of the next group would be easier, because many of the men would find the gaps made by the first group, who were the pioneers of

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the operation. Meanwhile an efficient covering fire would be maintained from the original fire position in rear, which should be kept at its full strength by reinforcements as each group leaves it to cross the hedge. When the whole of the original firing line has traversed the obstacle the attack would be continued, the supporting company following through the hedge by sections when the firing line had advanced a sufficient distance to the front. Even if the enemy still maintained a fire against the hedge it cannot be so effective as was originally the case, because the advance of the firing line would draw away a good deal of their fire. Care would have to be taken that the supports were not left too far behind, because the decisive stage of the battle is now approaching and the firing line will require reinforcement.

If, owing to the nature of the ground, it is impossible to arrange for covering fire from behind the obstacle, over the head of the firing line that is being formed in front of it, the best plan would be to endeavour to get a whole section through the obstacle by groups as rapidly as possible, the remaining sections engaging the enemy from the fire position in rear of the obstacle and on the flank of the section that is being sent forward. Whilst the new firing line is being built up on the far side of the obstacle it will, of course, provide covering fire for the groups or sections still in rear.

The case of a hedge which runs diagonally across the front of an attack is even more difficult to deal with, especially if the line of the hedge can be enfiladed from the enemy's position. As already described, when dealing with diagonal fire positions, it is best for each company to commence crossing the hedge from the flank which is furthest away from it. This will reduce the probability of the firing line being established along the line of the fence facing in the wrong direction. In other respect

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the operation might be carried out in a manner similar to that described for a hedge which is parallel to the front of the attack, great care being taken to ensure that the commander of the flank group that advances first establishes a fire position beyond the obstacle facing in the correct direction. This would give a good indication of the line to be taken up by the remaining groups as they come up on the outer flank.

We will suppose, for example, that a thick hedge is encountered by a company that has three sections in the firing line and one section still in support, and that the hedge runs diagonally from the right flank of the company, receding towards the enemy on the left flank. The right flank of the company would then be much nearer to the obstacle than the left flank. A fire position would be occupied in rear of the obstacle, facing, of course, in the correct direction; and it could be made as strong as possible by reinforcing with the section still in support. The right flank of this fire position would be fairly close to the hedge, otherwise the left portion of the company would have too far to go to reach the hedge in one rush. A group on the extreme left would advance, pass the hedge as rapidly as possible, and commence the formation of a firing line on the far side, facing in the right direction. Other groups would then follow, building up the new firing line from left to right. If it is possible to provide covering fire throughout from the fire position in rear of the hedge, this position would be reinforced by a reserve company from the rear to maintain it at its full strength until the whole of the leading company has gone forward. The second company would then resume its duties as a reserve.

Obstacles, such as vineyards and hop fields, are difficult to traverse when exposed to the enemy's view and fire. Some vineyards, indeed, form almost as good an obstacle

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as could be made by the engineers. The vines are very low, and they afford very little cover from view and fire, and the only compensating advantage they have is that it is extremely difficult for the enemy to deliver a counter-stroke through them. With many of them it is quite impossible for the groups to rush forward; the men would be tripped up before going more than a few yards, and it would be extremely difficult to collect them together on the far side. Perhaps the best solution is for the sections to creep forward as a whole; it is a slow process, but it is sure, and fire can be opened at any minute.

Hop fields are not so bad as vineyards, because the high poles and the foliage, if the hops are grown, cover the attack from view, and it is not difficult for individual men to force a passage through.

Very high crops, such as maize, cholum, &c., are an obstacle to the attack, because no one can see where anyone else has got to. The enemy may be able to observe the advance of the attack, especially if they are occupying a position on high ground and the attack is advancing over low ground. Human nature is rather busy on such occasions trying to induce individual men to remain hidden in the cover afforded by the obstacle, especially if they lose touch with their own particular group or section. The best manner of traversing this obstacle is to form a series of small columns and conduct the advance much in the same manner as at night, the groups or sections being ready to deploy at a moment's notice, and scouts being very active in front. Owing to the height of the crops the enemy's fire cannot be effective, and small columns would get through more rapidly, with less confusion, and with less chance of being seen and fired upon by the enemy, than any extended lines either in groups or sections.

Standing corn is hardly an obstacle, and soon gets

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trampled down by attacking troops; when close to a defensive position it is always destroyed, as it gives a certain amount of cover to the attack. Men standing up in it can be seen very plainly by the enemy, and it is usually impossible to fire without standing up, in which case the fire is not very effective. Probably the best manner of getting through it is to advance by complete sections in a series of rushes without firing at all, the only object being to pass through it and establish a fire position beyond. The edge of the crop forms a very good mark for the enemy's fire; the sections, therefore, should not halt to fire exactly when reaching the edge, but endeavour to occupy a fire position beyond.

An obstacle like a quarry or deep pit, or high buildings, which cannot be crossed, are apt to cause confusion in a firing line and create gaps when the attack has passed them. A company which encounters such an obstacle will have to go round it, consequently the only points to consider are what formation should be adopted during the process and how the firing line is to be established beyond. If the company strikes the obstacle on its right centre or flank, it is best for the whole company to pass round the left flank, because there is less chance of losing a section when reaching the far side. Presuming that the obstacle itself is more or less under fire, and that the edge towards the enemy is subject to a very heavy fire, it would be advisable for the company commander to reduce the front of his attack and pass round the obstacle by sections. The leading section would push on and join the left flank of the firing line of the company on the left, whose advance has not been interfered with by the obstacle. The remaining sections would follow as rapidly as possible and join the right flank of the leading sections.

Wet marshy ground with small pools is apt to disorganize somewhat the attack of the company. It is

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extraordinary how the influence of civil life comes out in the soldier, who will risk being killed or wounded rather than lie down in a pool of water. The result is that the forward rushes are apt to become straggling, and groups or sections will move frequently half-right or half-left to avoid a large pool and thus lose direction. Of course, the only solution is to go straight through everything, get up when ordered to do so, and lie down at the end of the rush, whether the ground is wet or dry.

Throughout this discussion on the subject of obstacles reference has been made repeatedly to the establishment of temporary fire superiority, so it may be as well to explain what is meant by this. During the most strenuous battle firing is not continuous, especially during the stage of the attack which we are now considering. This being the case, it is quite possible for one side or the other, by means of well-directed, well-controlled, and well-aimed rapid fire to gain temporary superiority of fire. That is to say, for the moment, the fire is so heavy and accurate that the enemy will not be able to use their rifles with effect, and most of them will, no doubt, be keeping their heads under cover until a more favourable or less risky opportunity occurs of continuing their fire. Rapid fire cannot be sustained for long either by the infantry or by the artillery, on account of the limited amount of ammunition available. For example, if artillery were to continue rapid fire they would expend all the ammunition anywhere near the battlefield in less than an hour, and it would take a still shorter time for an infantry soldier to fire off his 150 or 200 rounds. For these reasons it is quite feasible for the attack to produce superiority of fire at any particular moment and for a short time; in fact, it is only by this means that such serious obstacles as those described above can be negotiated successfully and without an undue number of casualties.

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We now come to the third type of obstacle which is nowhere exposed to the enemy's view or fire. The only danger such an obstacle has for the attack is that it may cause loss of direction and delay to part of the attacking line, which would produce undesirable situations when the enemy again comes within view. For example, a company striking a thick wood might lose its direction, come out on the far side facing the flank of the general line of attack instead of the front, and might even mistake troops of their own side for the enemy. Again, a company might be a long time getting through the obstacle, with a result that those parts of the firing line that were beyond the influence of the obstacle might continue their attack, which would not be simultaneous along the whole front and consequently would lose in effect, to say nothing of subjecting a flank in the centre of the attack, where no flank should exist, to a counter-stroke. The most important points to attend to are, first, to discover if the far side is or is not exposed to hostile fire; secondly, to ascertain the shortest way through the obstacle; thirdly, to make quite sure of the true direction when passing the obstacle: and, fourthly, to be prepared to deploy the company facing in the correct direction when the obstacle has been passed. If these matters are attended to, and scouts sent on directly the obstacle is discovered, it is quite possible that the company which strikes the obstacle will get through it and be deployed beyond it before the rest of the attack, which may be advancing in the open under fire, can reach the same line. As already pointed out, if the company can do this it will materially assist the flank companies in their forward progress, and our company will have made the best possible use of the obstacle, which instead of being a hindrance has been an advantage to the attack, because

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the company has gained a more forward fire position than the rest of the line.

Having considered the selection of fire positions and the passage of obstacles, we must now turn to the general formation which should be adopted by the company and the system of gradually reinforcing the firing line. It has been dinned into us for many years that normal formations for attack are absolutely prohibited, and sufficient has already been said in this chapter to prove the absolute truth of this principle. At the same time our company is divided into four sections, which are again divided into groups; and it is desirable for us to understand certain principles so that we can make up our minds to extend one section and follow in support with three, or extend two sections and follow with two, or extend three and follow with one. In great attacks, where the company is one of many others, it is not expected that the original firing line will of its own efforts be able to gain superiority of fire over the enemy, and deliver the assault. It is recognized that in modern war an attack of this nature takes the form of a perpetual push; it is like a flood which rises more and more, the weight of water ever increasing, and finally it overcomes the resistance of the dam in front, and, rushing over every obstacle, drives back all obstructions that are met with.

This being the case the company must have the means of providing this constant push, to enable it to get forward without long pauses or delays when it encounters something unusually objectionable in the way of hostile fire, and when human nature is getting a temporary advantage in its perpetual struggle against discipline and training. If the firing line is getting the least bit "sticky," to use a slang but apt expression, it only wants a little push and all will be well; but if that little push is not applied at once, without any delay, human nature

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will begin to get the best of its struggle with discipline and training, and although no one is thinking about retiring, the prospects of further advance will not appear very enticing to some of the human beings in the firing line. It is clear, therefore, that the company commander must have at his disposal the means of providing this energy, and that he must use it sparingly, because when he has finished his supply the push has to be provided by other companies, and it is undesirable in every way to introduce fresh units into the firing line until it is absolutely necessary, because a certain amount of confusion is certain to ensue, and command and control of fire becomes difficult.

If, therefore, our company commander deploys three sections when first entering this phase of the attack and keeps only one section in support, he will not have much driving power to take his company successfully through this phase. Then we say, let us deploy one section and keep three in support, and we shall have lots of push. Unfortunately, however, there is another objection to this: one section, owing to the enemy's fire, may not be able to advance from its first fire position, and it will be necessary for us to reinforce it at once. If we commence reinforcing so early we may have to continue doing so in order to get forward from almost every fire position. It is like the untrained soldier on a hot day who begins to drink out of his water-bottle directly he starts, the only result being that he wants to drink again a few minutes later, and soon reaches the end of his supply. Then let us make a rule always to start with two sections and have two in support, that will give us a good deal of "push" to apply as required. Unfortunately this will not suit all occasions, though probably it would suit the majority of cases. There is no object in deploying two sections when one would do

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the work equally well. If the enemy's fire was not very heavy and the ground in front was very broken, it would be far better to deploy only one section. This section could get forward more rapidly and with less risk of losing its direction in broken ground than if two were deployed, whilst it would be a simple matter to lead forward the three sections in reserve from one halting-place to another without expending very much of the available energy stored up in the company.

The company commander, however, must be closely watching his firing line and must be ready at any moment to send up a section to reinforce if he thinks it is necessary, watch how the groups or the sections advanced from the last fire position to the present one, see whether they all got up together, came forward together and lay down together, also watch the control of fire, and he will soon find out when a little more energy is required in the shape of company reinforcements. Unfortunately we can only practise this in war; nevertheless it is a good thing to think about it in peace and remember that these human beings, whom we have turned into soldiers want every assistance we can give them when they are bravely facing the enemy in the attack. It should be a point of honour with the company that they can get through the second stage of the attack without reinforcement from the companies in reserve. By that time their ammunition will be getting reduced, and they cannot be expected to gain superiority of fire over the enemy without assistance. If our company can do this it will have done a great deal; it will have gained ground to the front which can be traversed in comparative safety by the companies that are following behind, and it will have occupied a fire position close enough to the enemy to enable further reinforcements to establish superiority of fire. The great point to remember throughout is that the reinforcement

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of the firing line is required to prevent the attack losing any of its vigour, that this reinforcement should not be applied until it is necessary and that then it should be provided at once. During this stage of the attack, a firing line that remains too long in one fire position loses its momentum and requires fresh energy to start it again, and this energy can only be supplied by reinforcements. We see, therefore, that the application of reinforcements is no haphazard matter, but requires the most careful attention on the part of the company commander. We recognize also that the circumstances which rule the system of reinforcements do not exist in peace training, where the stress of battle is not felt, and this is apt to make us forget its importance and neglect to apply it. As a result, we find weak firing lines reaching the end of this stage of the attack, and occupying fire positions which could not have been gained in war without further application of force.

We now come to the culminating-point of this stage of the attack, namely, the establishment of a fire position close enough to the enemy to enable us to use our rifles with such accuracy that it is possible to gain superiority of fire over the enemy. The question naturally arises, what distance can be considered close enough for this purpose? It may be said at once that the distance depends almost entirely upon the nature of the ground in front of the enemy's position, which rules the cover afforded to the attack, and the excellence of the fire positions available, or the reverse. If our company is particularly favoured by the ground, if it finds good fire positions during its advance, and if it can approach within a hundred yards of the enemy and establish itself in that locality, that is the distance we want to know. If, on the other hand, the ground is so open, and the enemy's field of fire is so good, with no dead ground in front of

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his position, it may be impossible for the company to approach nearer than six hundred yards from the enemy without gaining superiority of fire. It is useless to attempt to advance over such ground to within a hundred yards of the enemy without first obtaining at least some superiority of fire. The attack would die out, the fire would be very difficult to maintain, and the result would be that the enemy having gained superiority of fire over the front line of the attack, would concentrate nearly the whole of their attention upon preventing the arrival of reinforcements.

A great deal depends upon the existence of a good fire position in front, which will provide a certain amount of cover to the attack. For example, if the ground is very open and our company has reached a position six hundred yards from the enemy, and a low ridge parallel to the front of the attack is visible two hundred yards in front, every effort should be made to reach that ridge and establish a fire position upon it. If the company commander is sure that there is not sufficient energy left in his company to succeed in this effort, he must ask for reinforcements, so as to ensure that the necessary push is applied. It must be remembered, however, that these reinforcements should not be used unless it is absolutely necessary, because they will not be so fresh when they reach the fire position as if they had come up later on, after the advanced fire position had been established, and in consequence there would be a loss of energy as regards the whole attack. In the one case they would be exposed to the full force of the enemy's defence, and in the other they would arrive at the forward fire position a little out of breath, no doubt, but otherwise quite fresh for the struggle for superiority of fire.

It appears, therefore, that in some parts of the line of battle, the companies will be able to get much closer to

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the enemy's position than in other parts, and that it is the one object of every company and its commander, during this stage of the attack, to get as close to the enemy as the ground and the remaining energy of the company will permit. The spirit to nourish in every officer, non-commissioned officer and man in the company is the perpetual desire to gain a few more yards of ground, so that the enemy's fire can be beaten down more effectually when the attack is brought to a temporary standstill for this purpose.

When it becomes apparent to the company commander that the attack, however strong it may be, will be unable to gain much more ground to the front, until superiority of fire is obtained, he should use every endeavour to replenish his supply of ammunition. If any covered locality exists where ammunition can be brought up and issued to one section of the company, whilst the remainder are occupying a fire position in front, this section, with every man carrying as much ammunition as he can hold, can then join the firing line and distribute ammunition to the men in the fire position in front. The supply of ammunition at the end of this stage of the attack is of vital importance and may mean success or failure.

When describing this stage of the attack no attempt has been made to slur over any of the difficulties that will arise, and it may appear to some, who have had no experience of war, that these difficulties are almost unsurmountable, and that the defence has a much easier task than the attack. It has been proved, however, beyond doubt, that the defence is more difficult to maintain than the attack, the chief reason being that it is much more trying to human nature to wait in one place whilst some one else is hitting us, than to be hitting out ourselves. There is a spirit of dash and daring in the attack which is quite different to the stubborn and more

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passive spirit of the defence. The attack is on the rising tide and the defence is on the ebb. We can liken the attack to an alpine climber, whose whole energies are concentrated upon overcoming all difficulties and gaining the summit of the mountain; in the defence we have the grim determination of the man who is hanging on to some crag which he has reached, who knows that he can go no farther, and hopes that assistance will arrive before his energies give way.

If the man who is attacking and who is beginning to feel that he is approaching the end of his powers of offence could, for a moment, transfer himself to the defence, and realize the feelings of the men in the trenches, he would be greatly encouraged to continue his efforts and do his utmost to win the battle. Human nature is divided into two opposing camps: there are the excellent qualities which make a man worthy of the name, and which enable him to put his king and country, and his desire to win, before everything else; and there is the little devil on the other side who is always fighting against these qualities, and who, if we give way and listen to him, is always prepared to prove to us that further effort is useless, that things have been badly managed and have gone wrong, and that, after all one man cannot do much by himself. Yet, on the other hand, it is the one man who wins the battle: he does what is right and his comrades see it, and if the little devil is persecuting them they are encouraged to damn the expense and follow the brave man to victory.

It is proverbial that all that is best and all that is worst come out in the human being in war. Let us make the most of the manly qualities which lead to success, and which are brought out on every possible occasion during peace training, either in games, competitions, or on the training ground, so that in war they will invariably

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attack and defeat the little devil representing the worst qualities.

During the whole period of this stage of the attack the artillery will have been co-operating closely with the infantry. To ensure this, two arrangements are made, one to meet difficulties which can be foreseen and the other to deal with those which may develop unexpectedly during the attack. As regards the difficulties which can be recognized beforehand, endeavours are made by means of previous reconnaissance to discover their nature, and special artillery arrangements are made to assist the infantry to overcome them. These difficulties are of two kinds: the passage of obstacles, especially as regards emerging on the far side; and the attack over ground which is exceptionally exposed to the enemy's fire. The infantry commander will have pointed out that some of his companies, during the attack, will be able to get forward with comparative ease, owing to the covered nature of the approaches and to the good fire positions available; he will have shown that other companies will have great difficulty in advancing, owing to the exposed nature of the ground, and consequently will require very careful artillery support. He may have been able to recognize on the map or on the ground some physical obstacle which is likely to delay his attack, and possibly to hold it up altogether unless assistance is forthcoming from the artillery. The artillery are then placed in such positions that they can act in support of the infantry and help them to carry out their task without delay. As regard difficulties which cannot be foreseen, an artillery officer is sent forward with the infantry to keep in touch with the situation in the front line of battle, and either go back himself or send back a message explaining any trouble which has arisen, owing to an obstacle or exposed ground or an unexpected

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attack. Being an artillery officer he will know what can and what cannot be done by the guns, and consequently he will not suggest impracticable schemes. The cavalry, also, are employed in guarding the flanks of the infantry and preventing the enemy from suddenly attacking them in flank or rear whilst engaged in the attack.

There is not much probability of a hostile counterstroke during this stage of the attack, because the latter will not have developed sufficiently to enable the enemy to decide upon the best direction in which to deliver it. There is always the possibility, however, of the enemy attacking instead of remaining in what was believed to be a defensive position. This possibility has already been referred to as regards the action to be taken by the company, and it is only necessary to add that if a hostile attack does develop it ought to be met in the same manner as in the encounter battle which is dealt with in Chapter XI, every effort being made to prevent our attack from being turned into the defence.

During this stage of the attack the formations and action generally of the companies following in battalion reserve should fulfil three requirements.

First, they must follow the front line with as little loss as possible, either in casualties or in energy, so that they may be quite fresh when they are called upon to join the firing line.

Secondly, they must be ready to reinforce the firing line, whenever required, and without delay.

Thirdly, they must be ready to provide covering fire whenever the ground is suitable for the purpose, and the firing line requires this support.

We will study these requirements and endeavour to arrive at some reasonable solutions as to how we can fulfil them. The first thing every one wants to know is the distance that the reserve companies should be from

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the firing line in front, and that is one of the many questions which will not permit of a definite reply. The only thing we can do is to state what we should aim at what we should avoid, and what is unavoidable.

The company must be close enough to reinforce without delay, and, when possible, it must be far enough away to escape any fire directed against the leading line. This being the case we must consider when the reinforcements are likely to be required. Certainly not at the commencement of this stage, possibly halfway through, and probably, or one might say certainly, at the end of it. It is clear, therefore, that the companies following the front line can be further away at the commencement of this stage than at the end, so we must arrange that the front line is gradually overtaken during the advance.

If the rear companies are three hundred yards behind the supports of the firing line they are not likely to be hit by any projectiles aimed at the latter, except by our old friend the third-class shot who has forgotten to lower the backsight of his rifle as our firing line advanced, and that is a risk which we can accept. No doubt the enemy may order certain portions of their force to fire at these reserve companies; but this would, of course, reduce the effect of their fire on the leading companies of our attack, a fact which would be accepted by the latter with resignation. Here again we must accept the risk, and, by our method of advance, do what we can to diminish it. If there is a good deal of dead ground in front of the enemy's position, with very exposed patches between, such as a series of ridges or low hills over which the attack must advance, it is possible that the enemy might have an opportunity of devoting a good deal of attention to our reserve companies, and the reason is easy to explain. The firing line would only be visible for short periods,

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and then disappear into dead ground, for a time the enemy would have nothing to shoot at unless our reserve companies showed up immediately after the firing line had disappeared, when the enemy might fill up the time by opening fire upon them. The infantry would certainly have to alter their sights for the purpose, and the third-class shots might get mixed and shoot with the long range at the firing line and with the short range at the reserve companies. In any case, it appears to be desirable to avoid this, and time the appearance of the reserve companies on an open patch so as to coincide with the appearance of our firing line on another patch. The third-class shot could shoot at the "brown" of us, but the two lines would be a good distance apart and he might not hit either. The unfortunate third-class shot has been dragged in here with malice aforethought, not only because he cannot shoot straight, but to show what "rotten" things he can do in other respects.

As a rough guide, it is probable that we should fulfil all the requirements of the case in most situations where the ground is open, if, at the commencement of this stage of the attack, we start off the reserve companies about four hundred yards in rear of the supports to the firing line, and decrease the distance to about two hundred yards towards the end of the stage.

It occurs, sometimes, that the reserve companies, in their efforts to keep within supporting distance of the firing line, follow it at a distance of two or three hundred yards over perfectly open ground. The firing line then happens to find a good fire position, which they occupy at once, and there may be some delay before the advance is continued. During this time the reserve companies will be lying out in the open exposed to any fire the enemy may choose to direct against them, whereas if they had halted fifty yards further back

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they might have remained under cover. The only way of overcoming this difficulty is for the commanders of reserve companies to watch very carefully the action of the firing line and study the ground the latter are advancing over, and if they see a situation of this nature likely to develop to allow the firing line to get well forward before they move their reserve companies. This will mean that at one time the reserve companies are much farther away from the firing line than at another, and proves how wise the regulations are to avoid giving any definite distances between the various echelons of the attack.

The commanders of the reserve companies should be on the look-out constantly for suitable fire positions in front, so that if the advance is checked, and covering fire is required from the reserve, they can occupy a suitable position without delay. Another important point as regards the advance of the reserve companies is that they should avoid any difficulties encountered by the leading companies, if it is possible to do so. For example, one company of the front line might have struck a particularly favourable approach, whilst another company might have been advancing over very exposed ground. There appears to be no reason why the reserve companies should not follow the covered line of advance, especially if they can deploy from it without difficulty, if required. Similarly, in the passage of an obstacle, one place might be much easier for the reserve companies to get through than another, and if they can discover this fact in time they might be able to arrange their line of advance accordingly. The best plan appears to be to send forward a few company scouts to advance with the supports to the front line, and bring back any useful information that can be obtained in this way. The reserve companies are, of course, under the command of

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the battalion commander, but that does not prohibit their captains from taking any of the steps suggested above when they are training their companies.

The formation adopted by the reserve companies during the advance would be similar to those of the first line, except that they would rarely move in smaller bodies than sections. Probably the best formation to suit most cases would be two sections leading and two following in rear, the whole company closing up when dead ground is reached. It is impossible, however, to lay down any fixed formation; for example, the company might have to cross a small ridge, and the enemy's shells might be bursting in considerable numbers over the left portion of it, but very few over the right portion. The reserve company would, naturally, advance in column of sections over the right portion, each section in turn rushing over behind the leading section. We see, therefore, that we cannot decide upon any formation which would suit all cases any more than we could fix a definite distance between the reserve companies and the firing line; so much depends upon the nature of the ground, the extent of the enemy's fire, and the tactical circumstances of the moment. We can only deal with a few examples the solution of which will give some idea of how to deal with others.

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CHAPTER IX

THE COMPANY IN ATTACK

THE THIRD STAGE OF THE ATTACK, THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPERIORITY OF FIRE OVER THE ENEMY

The third stage of the attack is, necessarily, a stationary operation. The company has reached a position as close to the enemy as it is possible to gain until the effect and accuracy of his fire are reduced by our own superior fire. Superiority of fire in plain and simple words means that the attack can at any moment silence or greatly reduce the fire of the defence. It means that a burst of rapid fire is immediately followed by a slackening or total cessation of the enemy's fire, when any one in our firing line can get up and walk about without undue risk of being hit, and that sections or groups can gain ground to the front with very few casualties. We must now consider how this much-desired state of affairs can be brought about. The regulations give us full information as to how the individual soldier, the individual non-commissioned officer and the officer are to act in order to produce effective fire, and there appears to be little to add except to accentuate or put into different words what has already been so clearly explained, introducing, perhaps, a little more human nature than is possible in these regulations.

Effective fire can only be produced by a combination of three things.

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Accuracy on the part of the soldier in the use of his rifle.

Direction on the part of the group or section commander as regards the range, the distribution of fire, that is to say the exact target, and the rate of fire.

Co-operation on the part of companies and sections to ensure that all parts of the enemy's line are exposed to the fire of the attack.

We will consider, first of all, the infantry soldier and the great value of being able to shoot straight, both to him personally as an encouragement to further efforts and to the army generally as to success in battle. If a man knows how to use his rifle, and realizes the effect upon the enemy which will be produced by his action, he will at once gain great self-confidence. If he knows that the men alongside him can also use their rifles to the best advantage he gains confidence in his company; if every company knows that other companies are as good as they are, the men will gain confidence in the superiority of our army as a whole, their self-respect will increase, and their respect for the enemy, as a foe, will be correspondingly reduced.

If this is the case it is necessary for us to be quite clear as to how the rifle is to be used, and perhaps the most important detail is to be able to hit or go very close to the object we aim at. We can gain superiority of fire by moral effect, as well as by actually hitting the enemy, provided we can go close enough to the target to make the enemy keep his head down and thus prevent him from firing back at us. If we can aim our rifles so that the bullets will pass just over the enemy's trench, or hit the top of it, the defenders, directly they expose their heads to fire their own rifles, will be hit, or our bullets will go very close to them. The afore-mentioned

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little devil who lives inside them will immediately suggest cover behind the trench, and quite a long interval may elapse before they try the experiment again. If, when the little devil has for the moment been overcome, the enemy again put up their heads to fire, and experience the same result, there will be a still longer pause before a similar effort is made, and finally it may be the exception rather than the rule for any heavy fire to be produced by the defenders. This means that the attack has gained superiority of fire. We see, therefore, that the first essential is ability to shoot straight, because wild shooting will only encourage the enemy, increase his self-respect, decrease his respect for the attack, and induce him to make further efforts.

There is no doubt that the fire of the man who cannot shoot straight may, on occasions, be effective because he may hit the supports or reserves. That, no doubt, is all to the good, but at the present moment we want to silence the enemy's firing line so that we can gain ground to the front, get within fifty or a hundred yards of his position without undue loss, and assault him with the bayonet.

We cannot silence the enemy's fire by hitting his supports and reserves, and therefore it appears that the value of being able to shoot straight far outweighs any advantage to be gained by the inaccuracies of the third-class shot. All men cannot be marksmen or even first-class shots, but their shooting can be greatly improved, and if only they would realize in peace what a tremendous advantage it is to them personally, from the point of view of safety and defeating the little devil inside them alone, and to the army at large, for them to be able to shoot straight in war, their efforts to improve might increase. To most men the reason why they wish to improve is merely because of the company average or because they

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wish to avoid the extra training which is in front of them if they do not do well on the rifle range. A man should look upon his rifle as a sort of inanimate friend that is going to get him out of all the difficulties and dangers he will encounter in war, if only he can learn to use it properly.

We have heard a great deal so far about fire positions and the use of ground, and these are very important, but they are only means to an end and that end is to aim at the enemy and hit him.

Some men cannot shoot well because they cannot see, and they won't wear glasses because the little devil inside says that the other men will laugh at them. For such men it would be a good thing to provide some sort of simple glass or telescopic sight on the rifle, and it would be interesting to see how their shooting improved. With the present excellent system of musketry training, including grouping and other tests, it is a matter of some surprise that the shooting is not even better than it actually is.

The first and most important thing of all is to teach the men to shoot well; if we succeed in this we shall have no serious difficulty in gaining superiority of fire when we arrive at this third stage of attack, and this will not be the only advantage, because the knowledge that the men will possess that they are good shots will give them self-confidence and materially assist them in reaching this stage.

We must now consider fire direction and control on the part of group or section commanders, and the first difficulty to overcome is to ascertain the range; since, however, we hope to get within five hundred yards of the enemy's position before our attack is brought to a temporary halt, in order to gain fire superiority, the range, with our fixed sight, is not so very important, the

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trajectory being so flat. At the same time the range is important, and because it is easier to discover by our instruments a short range than a long one we should endeavour to ascertain the exact distance from our fire position to the enemy, making sure that the rangetakers know where the enemy is located, and using every endeavour to test the accuracy of our range. The first thing for the group or section commander to do is to try to find some place close to the enemy's position or trenches where the bullets of his section are likely to throw up dust when they strike. One round of nearly simultaneous fire by nine or ten men should be of great assistance in verifying the range.

The next matter to attend to is for the company commander to fix one reference mark for his whole company, some object like a prominent bush, tree, or building in the enemy's line of defence which can be recognized easily by every one. All further directions regarding the target for each section or group would be made with reference to that mark, which should, as a rule, be straight in front of the company so as to ensure that every company in the attack is engaging some part of the enemy's line. In case of a converging attack the same rule would frequently apply, because the nature of the operation would tend to draw the firing line into a curve facing the objective and, in consequence, each company by firing straight to its front will produce the concentration of fire which is required against that part of the enemy's line. Situations arise, nevertheless, when the fire of a whole company is required to be directed on a locality occupied by the enemy which is not straight in front of the company, in which case special orders would be issued by the company commander. For example, part of the attack might reach a favourable position within two hundred yards of the enemy's position, and word might be passed

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back that if the fire of the battalions right and left of this portion of the attack could be concentrated on this locality it would be possible to advance and assault the position at this point. The information would be brought up by reinforcements, and the fire of the company could for a short time be turned in this direction. It is advisable, therefore, for rangetakers to ascertain the correct range to other parts of the enemy's line in addition to the locality which he is occupying straight in front, so that the direction of the fire of the company can be changed if required without any delay. Having fixed the reference mark the captain would arrange for the distribution of the fire of his company, so as to ensure that all parts of that portion of the position occupied by the enemy in front of the company are brought under fire. Thus, half the company might be directed to fire to the right of the mark and half to the left. The section commander would then take up the distribution of fire and allot a certain front to his own section, indicating the direction to the right or left of the mark in the usual manner by extending the arm and counting the number of finger breadths. The chief difficulty at this stage of the operations is to make sure that the men recognize the place they are to aim at, adjust their sights correctly, and fire when ordered but not otherwise.

What usually occurs when the fire position is first established is that there is a general fusillade from both sides. This gradually slackens, and sometimes nearly dies down altogether; then there is a burst of fire from one side, immediately followed by a reply from the other, and the fire again slackens. This goes on for some time, until it is seen that directly one side opens fire the other side opens a heavier fire and reduces or actually silences the opponent's fire. This is the first sign that superiority of fire is being gained. For a time this superiority may be

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gained first by one side and then by the other, which shows that the struggle is not yet decided. As time goes on, one side gains superiority more frequently than the other, and we will suppose, in this case, that the attack is in the ascendant. When it is found that directly the enemy opens fire there is a tremendous burst of fire from the attack, and the fire of the defence at once slackens, we are approaching the end of this stage, and it is time to think about making a further advance, in order to get close enough to the enemy's position to charge with the bayonet and carry it by assault.

The company and section commanders during the whole of this stage of the attack have been quietly organizing sections and groups as reinforcements arrive. Each section and each group will be composed of men belonging to different companies, and sometimes to different battalions. The men, however, must be trained in peace to understand that their individual efforts are of little value unless the fire is organized, and they must be prepared to group themselves together and obey any officer or non-commissioned officer who is at hand and gives them orders. In the same manner the officers must be busy in the firing line organizing groups and sections, so as to make sure that the whole of the fire is under control, that every man fires at the right target when he is ordered to fire and ceases fire when he is told to do so.

Men coming up as reinforcements must find out from the men next to them the range, the aiming mark, and the directions which have been issued with reference to that mark. They must at once place themselves under the orders of the officer or non-commissioned officer who is in command of the group or section which they join, and not trouble about his rank, his company, or even the regiment to which he belongs. It is not the company or regiment which is fighting the battle, but the whole force.

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There is plenty of work for spare officers or non-commissioned officers in the firing line encouraging the men, watching the direction of the fire, and conveying orders or signals from company and section commanders to the groups. By this means the attack is still under adequate control, and ready at any moment to enter on the fourth stage of the battle—the advance to within assaulting distance of the enemy.

It is difficult to train men in this struggle for superiority of fire, because so much depends upon the bullet and its effect upon the human qualities of the soldier, an effect which it is impossible to produce in peace time. The attack reaches a certain fire position in front of the enemy, and the company commander is quite unable to say whether his men have suffered too severely during the preliminary stages to make any further advance, or whether, if reinforcements are brought up, it would be possible or desirable to gain any ground to the front before establishing superiority of fire. If the firing line approaches, over open ground, too close to the enemy's position before obtaining this superiority the men will not have the best chance of using their rifles with effect, because the enemy, from behind his trenches, may be able to keep down the fire of the attack and seriously damage any reinforcements coming up behind, over perfectly open ground. On the other hand, if the fire position is established too far back it is fairly certain that neither side will gain superiority of fire over the other, and a decision will not be arrived at. It is very difficult to lay down any principle which could be applied universally, because so much depends upon good shooting, the moral of the men, and the features of the ground. It appears, however, that three points should be considered by company commanders in this stage of the attack.

First, where the features of the ground permit of a

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certain amount of cover for the advance, both of the firing line and of the reinforcements which will be sent forward later, the fire position should be established as close to the enemy as possible. For example, if the ground is favourable, and a good fire position exists, it might be within two hundred yards of the enemy.

Secondly, the fire position must, in any case, be close enough, say within six hundred yards, even in the case of the most open and exposed ground, to ensure that a decision can be arrived at as regards superiority of fire.

Thirdly, it must be possible to send forward reinforcements to the firing line without exposing them too long on very open ground, and at short range, to the fire of the defence. When these conditions do not exist, the reinforcements will not arrive sufficiently fresh, morally and physically, to produce a satisfactory effect on the struggle which is going on for superiority of fire, and the attack may die out.

Failure in this stage of the attack is due, frequently, to the fact that every one does not understand the nature of the operation, and does not attach sufficient importance to the necessity for obtaining superiority of fire. It should be instilled into recruits and trained soldiers that the one aim and object of their musketry practice is to ensure success at this stage of the fight. We certainly want the men to be able to shoot well during the second stage of the attack, especially when providing covering fire, but the vital necessity is good shooting at this third stage, when success or failure depends upon the power possessed by the attack to gain superiority of fire over the enemy.

A great deal has been done during recent years to emphasize this important matter during peace training, and by the introduction of casualty screens during field operations it is now possible to convey to the troops

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some idea of the effect of their own fire upon the enemy, and the effect of the enemy's fire upon themselves; and when the umpires constantly put these screens up or down according to the comparative effect of the fire on each side it is a great help to company and section commanders. Unfortunately the number of umpires is bound to be limited, and single companies frequently carry out an attack without receiving much attention from any umpire. The company commander, however, who has thoroughly grasped the requirements of the case can do a good deal himself to produce the required situation, and he can at least prevent the establishment of a fire position within two or three hundred yards of the enemy, on perfectly open ground, with a long stretch of open ground in rear, which it would be quite impossible to occupy in war until some fire superiority had been gained over the enemy.

During the struggle for superiority of fire, the company may be exposed to the artillery as well as the infantry fire of the enemy, so we must inquire what our own artillery can do to help us in our task. We must remember that artillery cannot directly help every company in the firing line: partly because they are called upon to engage the enemy's artillery as well as his infantry; partly because it is necessary frequently to concentrate artillery fire in one locality to help forward companies who may have a very difficult task in front of them; and partly because it is rarely possible to arrange the artillery of the attack so that every part of the enemy's position can be brought under artillery fire.

It has been pointed out already (p. 128) that the artillery of the attack possess certain advantages over the artillery of the defence, and, during this stage of the fight, we may be sure that our artillery will make every endeavour to assist us in gaining superiority of fire. At

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the same time, guns cannot continue to use rapid fire for long periods, because they will expend more ammunition than is available, and will have none left for the fourth and fifth stages of the attack. Our artillery will endeavour by short bursts of rapid fire to slacken or silence any artillery fire which is opened upon the infantry, or which is directed against themselves with such effect as to disturb their own fire. The most important target for the artillery on either side is the opposing infantry, because it is the infantry of the attack who are going to get close enough to gain superiority of fire and subsequently assault the position, whilst it is the infantry of the defence who will be the main factor in the endeavour to prevent the attack from gaining this superiority.

It is unnecessary to discuss the alternative targets of opposing artillery as compared with opposing infantry, and it is sufficient to say that if the attack can produce infantry and artillery fire against infantry fire alone they are likely to have a fairly easy task in front of them, because the artillery can then concentrate the whole of their fire on the enemy's infantry. When, however, our attacking infantry are seriously affected by the enemy's artillery fire, it will be necessary for our guns to devote a good deal of fire to the enemy's guns, and this, of course, will take some of their fire from the enemy's infantry, but at the same time it will automatically relieve our own infantry from the vigour of the hostile artillery fire.

We see, therefore, that our guns will help us against the enemy's infantry as much as possible, and will only turn against his artillery when their fire is affecting our own infantry. Furthermore, our guns will only fire to subdue hostile artillery fire directed against themselves when that fire is so heavy that they cannot work the guns satisfactorily, or bring up their ammunition, until

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it is reduced. If the enemy's artillery are maintaining a mediocre and but slightly effective fire against our artillery the latter will neglect the former, because they will know that part of the enemy's fire effect is being wasted, and that by neglecting it there will be a greater chance of helping our infantry to obtain superiority of fire.

The infantry soldier is necessarily limited to looking after himself and dealing with the enemy's infantry alone, because it is of little use for him to fire at the enemy's guns, which are protected by shields, even if he can see them, which is improbable. The artillery on the other hand are never looking after themselves, except to retain the power of using their guns entirely for the assistance of the infantry.

During this stage of the attack our company may be called upon, with the rest of the firing line, to meet a counter-stroke delivered by the enemy. This counter-stroke may be directed against the outer flank of the whole line of attack, and would only affect, immediately, the companies on that flank; it may be delivered diagonally against any part of the front of the attack, especially if there is some physical feature which protects the outer flank of such a counter-stroke and renders enfilade fire from the attack impracticable; or it may be delivered straight from the enemy's position against the front of the attack. In the first case special arrangements are made to meet the situation, by placing reserves in a suitable position to deploy rapidly and advance against such a counter-stroke, and although the companies on the extreme flank may be compelled to change front, and thus subject themselves to possible enfilade fire from the enemy's position, the arrival of the newly deployed line, facing in the correct direction to deal with the enemy's advance, should soon restore the fight, and enable the original firing line to continue its

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efforts to gain superiority of fire and subsequently assault the enemy.

A counter-stroke delivered from the enemy's position in a diagonal direction against the front of the attack will only be possible, as a rule, when either the defending or the attacking line contains a marked salient, in which case reserves would be placed specially to deal with such a counter-stroke, as suggested in the last case. Here again a few companies might be compelled to form front in a new direction, but the advent of the reserve should soon put matters right.

There is only one way to deal with a counter-stroke delivered from the position straight against the front of our attack, and that is to attack it ourselves with the utmost vigour, and throw it at once on the defensive. Any idea of holding the fire position we are occupying, and letting the enemy attack us in it, is simply adopting a defensive attitude in what is, frequently, a very indifferent position. The very fact of advancing to the attack directly the counter-stroke appears, is demoralizing to the enemy, and if we can continue this attack and drive him back we shall have no more trouble about gaining superiority of fire. We can do what has been done in war many times before, namely, follow him into his position and carry it by assault. Our artillery are constantly on the look-out for a hostile counter-stroke, and are ready to turn every available gun against it, so as to help the infantry in their offensive movement.

It has been suggested, frequently, that the field training of a company should be amalgamated with its musketry training, and there is little doubt that training in this stage of the attack could be carried out better on the field firing range with bullets than with blank ammunition on the ordinary training ground. This would bring home to the men the fact that good shooting,

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and good fire direction and control, are part and parcel of their field training, and that when engaged in learning how to advance, select fire positions, &c., they must not forget their fire discipline. In fact every time the company goes out to field training, instruction in fire discipline, to suit the particular occasion, should never be omitted, because men are apt to get careless when only firing blank, the carelessness becomes a habit, and this habit means loss of efficiency in war. Field training and fire discipline must always go together, and conversely, when carrying out practices on the field firing range, as much attention should be paid to the selection of fire positions, the formation, the pace adopted, &c., as would be the case during field training.

The company is struck off duty for field training, and later on it is again struck off duty for musketry; the men are apt to look upon the two forms of instruction as different branches of training, and when they are engaged on one form of training they think they must be careful to attend only to the details of that branch and need not trouble much about the other.

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CHAPTER X

THE COMPANY IN ATTACK

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH STAGES OF THE ATTACK: THE ADVANCE AFTER SUPERIORITY OF FIRE HAS BEEN OBTAINED OVER THE ENEMY TO A POSITION CLOSE ENOUGH TO ASSAULT WITH THE BAYONET, AND THE DELIVERY OF THE ASSAULT

THERE is no doubt that the sooner we can gain superiority of fire the better, and furthermore, that if it is not gained within reasonable time the energies of the firing line will be exhausted, and the attack will die out. Examples of this have occurred on many battlefields during recent campaigns, so that time, as usual in war, is a very important factor. We read frequently of the long struggle for superiority of fire, and are apt to carry away the idea that this stage of the attack is a lengthy proceeding and that there is no hurry. Such, however, is not the case, and every effort should be made by good shooting, good fire direction and control, to bring matters to a successful issue at the earliest possible moment.

During the third stage of the fight, company commanders should be closely watching the comparative effect of the fire and, immediately they consider superiority of fire has been obtained by the attack, the forward movement should be recommenced. The object of this forward movement is to gain a position close enough to the enemy to deliver an assault. It is clear that if the

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fire position has been established, say, five hundred yards from the enemy, the latter cannot be assaulted from that distance. It is probable, to ensure a successful assault, that the line of assembly for the assaulting troops should be within a hundred yards of the enemy.

Assuming that our firing line has obtained superiority of fire, and that the forward movement is about to commence, we can now consider who is to advance, what covering fire is necessary, what formations are to be adopted, what is to be the length of the forward rushes, and what is to be the action of the second or third lines which are following in rear of the company.

We may say at once that the actual training of the troops in these two last stages of the attack is more effective during battalion and brigade training than during company training, because it is difficult to get a single company mixed up as it would be in war. It is possible, however, and very good training, for two companies to work together, one finding the original firing line and the other being the company in reserve, the latter being brought up partly before the fire position at the end of the third stage is reached and partly after it has been occupied. This will cause an increased mixing up of small fire units, and give good practice to the non-commissioned officers in commanding any group of men they find in the front of them, and also to the men as regards banding themselves together, ready to obey any one who assumes command.

The question as to who is to advance depends upon the necessity or otherwise of providing covering fire. It may be laid down as a rule that it is never safe to attempt the further advance without making ample provision for covering fire, even when absolute superiority of fire appears to have been obtained over the enemy. As we have seen already there are two types of covering

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fire, one type delivered by a line of troops firing over the heads of other troops that are advancing and the other type delivered by sections, &c., to support the advance of other sections or groups on their right or left. The first type is by far the most effective, because it can be provided frequently by supports, or by reserve companies, and the firing line is free to move forward, still further assisted by the second type of covering fire which it can provide for itself.

The first type of covering fire is, of course, only possible when it is safe to shoot over the heads of the men in front, that is to say, when the covering fire is delivered from high ground and the firing line in front is on low ground; or when the enemy's position is on high ground and the firing line with its supporting troops is on lower ground, and thus looking up towards the enemy and rendering it possible for those behind to shoot over those in front. With a glacis slope, or on perfectly level ground, the first type of covering fire is not possible. The second type of this fire can be divided under two headings: first, there is the covering fire provided by a section or group to assist another section or group on its flank to gain ground to its front; and, secondly, there is the covering fire produced by a section which has already gone forward to assist the advance of a section in rear.

We must be prepared to arrange for one or other type of this covering fire to support the first advance that we make from our fire position. If we can fire over the heads of any sections or groups that advance, we might arrange that the original firing line should remain in its position to maintain the covering fire, and that reinforcements from the second line should be sent forward to assault. On the other hand, we might decide to send forward the original firing line and bring up the second line to provide covering fire. Of these two systems the first appears on

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the whole to be the best. It is desirable, however, to consider the arguments in favour of each. If the fresh line is sent forward the men will no doubt possess more energy, especially for the assault, which is to follow shortly ; when passing through the original firing line they may take some of it with them, and thus increase the strength of the assault. If the original firing line is sent forward, it may not have sufficient energy to initiate and carry through the assault, whereas it could be relied upon to provide covering fire, and probably would be more efficient at that work than the fresh line, because the groups and sections would know the range, and the places to aim at, and could continue the covering fire without a pause, directly the fresh line had passed through and got clear. The only drawback would be that the original line might be very short of ammunition, and ammunition would be required more for the covering line than for the assaulting line. This could be obviated by the second line throwing down ammunition to the original line when they pass through.

In cases where covering fire from the rear is out of the question it must be provided by the reinforced firing line as it moves forward, one section or group opening rapid fire when another section or group is advancing on its flank. Similarly, when one section or group has gone forward it should cover with rapid fire the groups coming up from behind. If there was any check in the advance, each company commander would order the whole of his company to open rapid fire, which would at once restore the superiority of fire, and, on the heels of this fusillade, the greater part of the whole line would gain ground to the front. This is probably a much more effective method of providing covering fire than with such small fire units as groups or sections. It would be necessary, however, for all company commanders to be on the look-out to give this order, so that the whole line would open fire

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together, and subsequently advance together, not of course in one complete line, but by groups or sections from every part of the line.

If the second line is to be brought through the original firing line, some arrangements must be made for bringing up the second line. It is not easy to do this, because fire superiority may be gained by the attack in one part of the line and not in another. In fact, the teaching of recent battles appears to point to the probability that one part of a firing line can approach within assaulting distance of the enemy, and actually deliver the assault successfully, before another part has established superiority of fire. This is a matter, however, for the higher commanders to deal with, and comes under the tactical direction of the whole battle, which is outside the province of the company commander, and is unnecessary to discuss here. Nevertheless, the company commander must be prepared to play his part, and that seems to be that as soon as fire superiority has been obtained he must at once commence his forward movement, because if ground can be gained in any part of the firing line, this fact will materially assist the rest of the line, and will indicate to the higher commanders that an extra push, provided by reinforcements to the successful portion of the firing line, is required, and, no doubt, will be forthcoming without delay.

The artillery, also, will be on the look-out for such a forward movement, and, by rapid bursts of fire, will greatly assist the infantry in their efforts. From the study of recent battles, it appears that this advance has been initiated frequently by small portions of the firing line, whose example has been followed by other portions, until a considerable part of the line has commenced to press forward. From this we can argue that every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man should be trained to understand that as soon as fire superiority has been gained,

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every one must advance and get the battle over, that any further delay in the fire position is unnecessary, and can only lead to useless casualties, and that success now lies in the assault upon the enemy, and no longer entirely on fire effect, which last is sufficiently maintained by the troops which have been brought up from the rear, and by the groups and sections of the firing line, who will cover the advance of their comrades, and by the artillery. It appears to be essential, therefore, for company commanders to initiate the forward movement on their own responsibility, directly it appears to them that fire superiority has been obtained.

We must now consider the formation which should be adopted for this forward movement. By this time the firing line will be packed as close as is compatible with the efficient use of the rifles, and consequently it must advance by groups and sections in that state. The rushes should be short, because the enemy, whose fire is already reduced, will not then be given time to fire at any particular body of men when they are actually running forward and presenting a larger target than when lying down; or at least they will not be able to fire until the men have gone some distance on their way. From ten to twenty yards appears to be quite far enough for one of these rushes. Meanwhile the artillery will open with rapid bursts of fire to assist the infantry. It should be remembered that it is quite impossible to arrange for such close co-operation between the infantry and the artillery to ensure that the latter will commence their bursts of fire at the exact moment any particular section or group is ready to advance. The infantry must be ready to take advantage of these bursts, when they happen to occur, in order to gain ground to the front.

We must now consider the passage of any natural or artificial obstacles which may be encountered during this

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advance to the position for assaulting the enemy. Natural obstacles, which have not been improved artificially, can be dealt with in the same manner as suggested in Chapter VIII for the second stage of the attack, their passage being no more difficult than in that stage, because although they are closer to the enemy's position, and his fire upon them is more effective, the extent of that fire has been greatly reduced by the fact that superiority of fire has already been gained by the attack. It is always possible, however, that the enemy's trenches may have been reinforced by fresh troops, and that a sudden burst of fire may break out, which will require powerful covering fire to reduce. Even when this covering fire is provided by a second line of troops in rear, it is still necessary for the companies that are advancing towards the position for assault to provide additional covering fire. This covering fire is more difficult to arrange now than in the second stage because the companies have got so mixed up, but if the men have been formed into groups, irrespective of the company they belong to, as already suggested, this difficulty can be overcome. The ouly thing to do is to establish a fire position in the best locality available in rear of the obstacle, push groups by rapid rushes through the obstacle, and form a second fire position beyond.

The case of artificial obstacles is more difficult to deal with, chiefly because they are placed frequently in some locality which is hidden from the attack as it advances, and consequently comes as a surprise to the companies, the latter being liable to get involved in the obstacle before they are aware of its existence. Fortunately, artificial obstacles are not, as a rule, of very great extent because they take a long time to make, and because suitable material is not always available locally and cannot be carried with the army on account of its great weight. Moreover, extensive obstacles in front of a

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defensive position render any counter-stroke out of the position impossible.

If our engineers are at hand they will be invaluable to assist in cutting away the wire or other material of which the obstacle is constructed, and once several passages are made through it the procedure as regards the company would be the same as before. The firing line which was originally covering the operations of the engineers, and was located in a fire position in rear of the obstacle, would gradually push forward groups through the passages and build up a firing line on the far side.

When we see these operations carried out during peace training we are apt to think them very impossible, because we do not realize the one condition that makes them possible, namely, the fact that the attack has gained superiority of fire over the enemy. Exactly the same thing used to happen in the old days, especially during the assault on a breach when attacking a fortress. A covering party was provided on the glacis of the fort, and these men kept down the fire from the ramparts, and enabled the storming party to cross the ditch, climb up into the breach, and carry it by assault. It was quite impossible for the storming party to do this a hundred years ago without the assistance of the covering party, and it is equally impossible now, but with proper arrangements there is no reason why we should not overcome any obstacles we encounter during this stage of the fight as well as our forefathers overcame similar obstacles in the past. It is a perfectly feasible operation when the attack has gained definitely superiority of fire, just as it was in the days of Badajos, Ciudad Rodrigo, &c. If we read accounts of these sieges, and realize the heroic and successful efforts of these British soldiers in the passage of obstacles during this stage of the attack, it will encourage us to follow their excellent example, and enable us to

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realize that such an operation is no more difficult now than it was then.

The selection of the line of assembly, preparatory to the actual assault, will rest with company commanders, the main object being to get as close as possible, say, within a hundred yards, so that the men can rush the enemy's trenches without a halt. An assault that is compelled to halt halfway will rarely carry the enemy's trenches, and is likely to be driven back by a counter-stroke. Having reached the most forward position possible, the assaulting line will be built up rapidly by the groups advancing from the last fire position, and the assault will be initiated by the company commanders, every endeavour being made to prevent a premature assault, so frequently seen during peace training, where one company assaults before other companies to the right and left have assembled their men. It must be remembered that the enemy may still possess sufficient energy to charge out of their trenches, but any effort in that direction must be met with an immediate assault with the bayonet. Our artillery, which will be already heavily engaged with the enemy's infantry, will be on the look-out for such a move on his part, and will redouble their efforts as the enemy move forward. It is necessary for the infantry also to be on the alert, and, if covering fire is still possible, the firing line in rear, which is providing that covering fire will empty their magazines into the advancing enemy. Any adoption of a defensive attitude on the part of the assaulting line at such a moment would only lead to failure in the attack, so we should prepare our company in peace time to meet such a counter-stroke, so that it will become a habit to them, and their inclination in war will be to rush forward with the bayonet and not stay where they are to fire.

Failing any counter-stroke on the part of the enemy,

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the actual assault will be initiated by some company or higher commander actually in the assaulting line. It is most difficult, and probably impracticable, to arrange any signal for assault, and the only way to prevent a premature assault is for every officer in the assaulting line to make sure that it has been built up in sufficient strength before the word is given locally. Once it is commenced, every other company, whether it is ready or not, must immediately conform, and charge the enemy in his trenches. The artillery are again looking out for this assault, and in order to avoid hitting our own men they will increase their range and burst their shells just beyond the enemy's trenches, so as to check the possible arrival of hostile supports or reserves.

The next step is to occupy immediately the best fire position available beyond the enemy's trenches so as to repulse any belated counter-stroke which may be delivered with the object of regaining the position. In this the infantry will again be assisted by the artillery, who will send forward guns at a gallop to occupy the position just captured, assist in repelling any counter-stroke, and open a heavy fire on the retreating enemy to prevent them from reforming.

We have now followed the fortunes of our company from the commencement of the first stage of the attack to its successful termination, and it is only necessary to add that all the companies in the army do not have such a trying experience, and that the majority of them hardly come under fire until they are called upon to join the front line during or towards the end of the third stage, and perhaps not until the fifth stage, when the actual assault is about to be delivered. The successful conduct of an attack is not an easy operation, but it is the only one that can win us a battle, and if we realize in peace time only a few of the difficulties that are likely to arise

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and ascertain at least one method of dealing with each we shall not be surprised when we meet the enemy; we shall feel that we are better trained, better led, and better marksmen than he is; we shall have confidence in our leaders, our comrades, and ourselves, and no one can go into battle in a better state of mind or with more prospect of success.

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CHAPTER XI

THE COMPANY IN ATTACK

THE ENCOUNTER BATTLE AND THE ADVANCED GUARD ACTION

The battle of encounter is the name given to an engagemen when two opposing forces meet and become engaged before either side has had time to make any elaborate arrangements for attack or defence, Such an engagement is preceded usually by an action between the opposing advanced guards, and at a very early stage in the operations one side is thrown on the defensive and the other side attacks. We are not concerned here with the tactical arrangements for such a battle, because they do not form part of company training; all that it is necessary to discuss is the action of the company when it finds itself suddenly deployed for battle and ordered to advance against an enemy which is also advancing against it.

It is apparent at once that the first and second stages of the attack described in the previous chapters will be greatly curtailed, and that considerable modifications are required both as regards the action of the company and the formations it adopts. The first matter to realize is that the ground where the engagement takes place has not been selected as being particularly suitable for battle by either side. No doubt it contains several important tactical features such as ridges, hills, streams, woods, villages, &c., but these features have not been carefully

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studied beforehand with a view either to attack or defence. A certain amount of rapid reconnaissance will have been made, but there will be no great defensive position carefully entrenched with a good field of fire, with obstacles to view and fire removed and artificial obstacles constructed to increase the difficulties of the attack.

There is almost certain to be one important tactical feature on the battlefield, the possession of which will greatly favour the side that holds it, either for attack or for defence. It may not be very marked or very important in itself but it will be important in comparison with the remaining features of the ground. It should be remembered that such a locality is useful to assist the attack as well as the defence; for example, a company with other companies might gain possession of it and the officers might think that so long as they hold it all will be well, and that no further attack is required. This is quite a wrong view to take, because if our infantry can gain ground beyond such a locality it is probable that our artillery can use it with great advantage to assist our further efforts; moreover, by continuing the attack our whole force is not thrown on the defensive, which is the one thing we wish to avoid.

This brings us to one of the main principles of an encounter engagement, which is that every company should constantly press forward and thus maintain the offensive and throw the enemy on the defensive—once this can be accomplished half the battle is won. The ground is not likely to favour either side, except that it will favour the side that knows best how to use it. It is probable that the direction of the advance will be more difficult to maintain than in the more formal battle previously described, and consequently company commanders must be prepared to withdraw sections from their firing line when they find that their companies are

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being squeezed out of the fight, and push forward sections when gaps occur. It is essential that a strong firing line should be deployed and maintained from the first, because every effort must be made to obtain superiority of fire as soon as possible, that being the only means of continuing the attack and throwing the enemy definitely on the defensive. The company, therefore, from the first would deploy two or perhaps three sections in the firing line, and retain the remainder ready to reinforce at any moment; because if both sides are advancing against each other the engagement will develop very rapidly, and superiority of fire may depend upon the immediate arrival of reinforcements. Similarly, supporting companies will follow much closer than in the ordinary battle, and will be prepared to suffer some loss in consequence.

The main requirement is energy on the part of all ranks, with a fixed determination to gain ground to the front, and throw the enemy on the defensive at all costs.

Having achieved success in the initial stages of this encounter battle, the final stages, consisting of the establishment of definite superiority of fire, the advance to within assaulting distance, and the delivery of the assault, would be carried out by the company in a similar manner to that described for the ordinary attack, except that the ground not having been specially chosen by the enemy for a defensive battle is likely to be unsuitable for that purpose, and the last stages of the attack would not be so difficult. As an additional argument to show the importance of throwing the enemy on the defensive, it is clear that the only alternative is for our attack to adopt that rôle, and then we should suffer the same disadvantages as regards bad positions, &c., which have already been quoted as advantageous to the attack It is, of course, assumed that the original idea of the commander of the

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force was to attack, and that orders have been issued for that attack. All we are trying to do here is to discover the difficulties and see how we can maintain the attack.

The attack of a company, when forming part of an advanced guard, is conducted in a somewhat different manner to those that have been described so far, although it closely resembles the encounter engagement in several details.

An advance guard moving in the direction of the enemy is liable to encounter a hostile advance guard moving forward to meet it, or a stationary outpost line covering the enemy's main body which is halted in rear of it. In either case the main object of the advance guard is to attack and defeat the enemy's advanced detachments before they can be reinforced from the rear.

If the company is with the vanguard it will meet a small hostile detachment which is not likely to be stronger than itself, and which, in every case, should be attacked immediately. There is no time on such occasions to formulate a plan which would entail a wide turning movement and consequently considerable delay, especially in the case of meeting a hostile advance guard, which is the first situation we will deal with. When the vanguard company first meets with resistance an opportunity is presented to it which will not recur; it must be seized at once, because in a short time the enemy will be reinforced from the rear. The features of the ground may not be good for attack and may be strong for defence, in which case it will be all the more tempting for the enemy to remain on the defensive. No question of committing the advanced guard to a serious action need disturb the mind of the officer commanding the vanguard company. There is an enemy in front who cannot be very strong for the moment, and if he can be defeated

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and driven back the whole of his advanced guard, and perhaps his main body as well, may be thrown on the defensive—such is the tremendous moral power of attack and of initial success.

Even if our attack with the vanguard company is brought to a standstill we have at least thrown the enemy on the defensive; the very fact that we have attacked will cause him to exaggerate greatly our strength, and when his reinforcements arrive the little devil inside the commander will advocate making good the position held by the leading troops of his advanced guard and defending it at all costs.

If both sides advanced to the attack the side that can develop the most powerful fire effect and make the most skilful use of the ground will throw the other on the defensive. The temporary superiority of fire in such cases is quite sufficient to admit of a further advance, with a view to gaining a position close enough to assault.

The great difficulty on these occasions is the protection of the flanks of the company. Owing to the requirements of training it is not often that a squadron and one or two companies can operate together during company training and practise their duties on advanced guard. It is, however, frequently possible to do this during battalion and brigade training, so that when the company commander is training his company in these duties he should explain to his men that their flanks which appear to be so unprotected are, in imagination, guarded by the action of the cavalry.

When our vanguard company encounters hostile outposts the enemy is already on the defensive and slightly more time is available, because his reinforcements are not actually marching up in rear as in the case of meeting a hostile advanced guard; his position is carefully chosen and no doubt his outpost companies will have

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occupied the most important tactical localities in the neighbourhood.

The speed and immediate application of all the force available to throw the enemy on the defensive is no longer required, and the object of the vanguard company would be to push forward, establish a fire position in the best locality available, and endeavour to gain superiority of fire over the defence. This should not be very difficult because, in all probability, the vanguard company will be stronger than the hostile outposts immediately in front of it, and by such action the vanguard company will at least disclose the enemy's position and to some extent his strength, and thus materially assist the operations of the main guard when it arrives shortly afterwards.

It will be a great advantage to the advanced guard commander, when he rides forward to reconnoitre, if he can be informed by the officer commanding the vanguard company that the latter has driven back the enemy's sentries who were posted in such and such places, indicating the localities; that the cavalry reported the enemy to be occupying some trenches on that hill; that he deployed his whole company and attacked the enemy, and that the company is now occupying a fire position four hundred yards from the enemy's trenches, and appears to be gaining superiority of fire; and that the cavalry have gone off to the flanks to try to discover the next outpost company to the right and left, and may be expected to report in a few minutes.

If, on the other hand, the company, when it met the enemy's outposts had been content merely to hold its ground and adopt a purely defensive attitude until the arrival of the main guard, the enemy would have been encouraged, and very little of the information given above would have been obtained; in fact, it might not be

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at all clear what was in front of the advanced guard, which, perhaps, was being held up by a few dismounted troopers.

We will now turn to the action of a company forming part of the main guard, and ascertain how the situation will affect its formations and general procedure during the attack, taking first the case where a hostile advanced guard is met. Here we see that everything depends upon speed and the full development of the force available; reserves are out of place in such an engagement, and supports are only required for the purpose of developing covering fire. Every rifle in the company should be used in order to gain superiority of fire as rapidly as possible. It is probable that artillery will be attached to the main guard, and, if the vanguard has already thrown the enemy on the defensive, his infantry will provide a stationary target for our guns in what may not be a very good position for defence.

The plan of attack will have been decided upon already by the advanced guard commander, and the main object of the company will be to reach a fire position close enough to gain superiority of fire with the least possible delay. The company commander, and every one in the company, will understand that the enemy may bring up reinforcements in a short time, so that each company will be prepared to push forward and get within assaulting distance directly there is any sign of the enemy's fire slackening. A good deal of risk can be accepted in the selection of the position where superiority of fire is to be gained, and it can be closer to the enemy than would be desirable in the case of a great battle, where the enemy is occupying a prepared position.

In this case the enemy is occupying the best locality he can find in the immediate neighbourhood, and in all probability it contains some very weak spots. The com-

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panies who find themselves opposite these weak spots will be specially favoured, and should succeed without great difficulty or delay in assaulting the enemy. A vigorous offensive is of the greatest value at all times, but never more so than when the companies of the advanced guard are opposed to a hostile advanced guard.

The company commander, when he has occupied his fire position, will not hesitate to throw every man into the firing line, either in the front line or to provide supporting fire if a good position exists in rear of the front line. If the company is on the flank of the attack, it is always desirable to keep one section on the outer flank to guard against attack from mounted troops. This section, however, can frequently be used to provide covering fire for the company, and be prepared at any moment to form front to a flank if required. In such a case the company scouts should be sent well out to the flank, and ordered to report to the officer or non-commissioned officer in command of the section told off to guard the flank.

It is necessary, sometimes, when artillery forms part of an advanced guard, to detach a company or section to protect the guns. In such a case the most important matter for the company commander to discover would be the direction from which the enemy is most likely to attack the guns, so that he can make his arrangements to meet that attack. It is quite clear that the enemy cannot attack over the ground which is being occupied by the advanced guard. The possible directions are limited, therefore, to three; the two flanks and the rear, the last-mentioned being quite possible if the enemy is strong in mounted troops, because these troops would, naturally, avoid running their heads against the attacking line of the advanced guard, and might hope for success by getting between the advanced guard and its main body, with the guns of the former as their objective.

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On the other hand, the general situation or the nature of the ground might prohibit an attack from more than one direction, which would simplify the task of the infantry escort to the guns. We will first take the case where an attack from one flank only is to be anticipated, and consider how the situation should be dealt with by the company. The main object would be to prevent the enemy from occupying any locality whence they could bring rifle fire to bear on the flank of the guns or against their wagons in rear. It is out of the question, as a rule, for the company actually to occupy all such localities, because, frequently, some of them would be too far away. If possible, and it is not too far away, the locality which commands the others should be selected for occupation by the company, provided, of course, that the enemy cannot get between the company and the artillery without being exposed to the rifle fire of the former. The company would then occupy this position for defence, and be prepared to form a firing line at a moment's notice against any other locality whence the enemy could fire on the guns or their wagons.

The company commander would send his scouts to all dead ground in the vicinity, to give warning of a hostile advance by any covered approach which existed, and he would ask the artillery commander to send out mounted scouts to give warning from a distance of any movement by the enemy against the flank of the guns. This is very important, because the direction of the enemy's advance can then be ascertained beforehand, and arrangements made to meet it, both by the company and by the artillery, who might wish to change the position of their wagons.

It is undesirable to place the company very close to the artillery, because it interferes with the working of the guns, and the company would suffer loss from any hostile artillery fire which was directed against the guns.

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The company commander should arrange to receive the earliest possible information as regards any change in the position of the guns, because the infantry move much slower than the artillery, and the former are apt to be left behind, especially when the scouts have to be called in or some detachment brought back. If the company is to follow the artillery to its new position the company commander should ascertain from the artillery commander the exact place the guns are going to, and the best route to follow, so that the company can get there as quickly as possible.

When the enemy may attack from either flank or from the rear, the company commander must make arrangements similar to those already described, to deal with each eventuality. It would be best, in this case, to keep the greater part of the company concentrated in the most important locality, where perhaps two out of the three possible lines of advance open to the enemy would be commanded. Any detachment which is made to guard one of the possible lines of approach should be as small as possible, because it can always be reinforced if necessary. The company commander will be prepared to move the company, and deploy a firing line very rapidly should the artillery be threatened.

If, by any chance, the enemy succeed in establishing a fire position on any locality whence they can by rifle fire interfere with the service of the guns, the company must attack that locality and carry it by assault. A vigorously pressed attack, with the prospect of a bayonet charge in the near future, could hardly be resisted by mounted troops engaged in dismounted fire action.

We can now consider the case of an attack by our main guard against a hostile outpost position. The arrangements as regards an individual company would be very similar to those for an attack against a hostile

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advanced guard, except that speed would not be of such vital importance, and the enemy, instead of holding whatever ground happened to be available and at all suitable, would be occupying some well-entrenched and carefully selected locality. The attack of the advanced guard would, probably, be of a converging nature, which would render the establishment of superiority of fire less difficult, and might enable the flank companies to avoid any artificial obstacles which had been placed in front of the enemy's trenches. The flank companies, therefore, could push forward more vigorously than the companies in front of the enemy's position, who would be bearing the full effect of the enemy's fire, and the assault would probably be delivered by one of the flank companies.

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CHAPTER XII

THE COMPANY IN ATTACK

THE COUNTER-STROKE

THE regulations lay great stress upon the importance of a counter-stroke, and if for any reason a force is compelled to act on the defensive there is no doubt that the only means of defeating the enemy is to change to the offensive and attack. It is usual to consider a counter-stroke under the heading of defence, but since from the point of view of our company it is nothing but an attack, it has been included in that category here.

It is important for us to know the circumstances of this particular type of attack so that our methods, formations, &c., will be suitable to meet the situation. A counter-stroke, as the word implies, is when we hit back at the enemy after he has hit at us, and the only objection to it is that the enemy may knock us out in his first blow, or we may have to use so much energy in warding off that first blow that nothing will be left to hit back with. This is what has actually occurred on many a battlefield, and, though it does not in the least detract from the value of the counter-stroke as such, it compels us to inquire into and fully understand the circumstances surrounding the operation.

The regulations contemplate two kinds of counter-stroke, the "general" and the "local." The first kind is employed in what is called the offensive-defensive

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battle, when a commander adopts a defensive attitude in one part of the field and an offensive course of action in another. The idea is that the enemy will attack us, and when he is committed to this attack, and has deployed all his troops for the purpose, that we should attack him from one or other flank of our defensive area. We are not dealing here with grand tactics, but it is permissible to say that if the one idea in the commander's mind is to attack and that he has only occupied a certain area defensibly to assist in his attack, and that whatever happens in the defensive area nothing will alter the attack, the operation is likely to succeed. If, however, the commander attaches very great importance to his defensive area, or if anything adverse can happen in that area which will paralyse the attack, the operation is not likely to succeed because the dominating idea will be defence; and there may not be enough powder in the cartridge to send the attack out of the barrel or to give it sufficient velocity to reach and destroy the enemy.

It is necessary to make this quite clear because the principles involved are very delicate and very dangerous if wrongly applied, and they affect the small operations of a company acting by itself just as much as they affect whole armies. We will suppose, for example, that the officer commanding an outpost company on the right flank of an outpost position receives information that the outpost company next to him is being heavily attacked, and that the outpost company beyond that one has actually been driven back. There is no one attacking our flank company, and no one reported to be a mile in front of it. There is now only one line of retreat for the two flank outpost companies, and this line is commanded by a small hill 500 yards behind the line occupied by the outpost companies and between the two. Our flank outpost company commander decides to fight an offensive-

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defensive battle. He is going to attack the enemy who are attacking the outpost company on his left, and he is going to hold the hill. Which is the dominating idea in his mind, to hold the hill or to drive back the enemy who are attacking the outpost company on his left? If the dominating idea is attack, the attack will probably succeed; if the main idea is to hold the hill and make quite sure of the line of retreat, the attack will probably fail, because there will not be enough powder in the cartridge to drive it home. The "offensive-defensive" sounds very fine, and we may note that "offensive" comes first, but it is a very difficult operation to conduct with success, and in practice "defensive" frequently comes first.

In extensive operations with large forces engaged, such manœuvres, so far as the individual company is concerned, resolve themselves into definite attack or definite defence. The attacking company would form part of a large force, which would be assembled under cover, free of the defensive area, ready to advance to the attack. The company amongst others would be given the direction in which it is to advance, and all we have to consider is the nature of the attack, the type of resistance that is likely to be met with as regards artillery and infantry fire, and the formation which should be adopted by the company. As regards the nature of the attack, it will, as a rule, be the intention to surprise the enemy, to strike him a blow from an unexpected direction, defeat the leading troops of his attack, before he can make adequate arrangements to prevent it; immediately follow up this success with a further attack against any hostile reserves that may appear, and thus drive back the enemy's force and win the battle. It is necessary, therefore, to initiate and maintain a vigorous offensive throughout, and this can only be ensured by a thorough realization of the requirements of the case on the part of all ranks of the company.

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It has already been noted that the enemy's troops, and not the position he is holding, are the chief objective of every attack, and this fact is accentuated in the situation we are discussing. Our counter-stroke is likely to meet the enemy's attack in localities where it will be difficult for his troops to adopt a defensive attitude; and if our commander has shown great skill in the selection of the battlefield, the enemy, owing to the ground, may be unable to initiate a fresh attack, or maintain his original one, without encountering serious difficulties, especially as regards his artillery support.

The attack, therefore, from the point of view of the company, is somewhat of the nature of an encounter engagement already described, except that we are not likely to meet with very serious fire resistance at first. There is no doubt that the most important matter at the commencement of the operation is for the company to gain a position within effective rifle range of the enemy. It must then endeavour to obtain superiority of fire with the least possible delay, and move forward to assault the enemy wherever he may be. If this is successful, the engagement will develop into a sort of "running fight," until the enemy's reserves appear, when it would be necessary to bring our firing line up to its full strength, use supporting fire whenever possible, and, aided by our artillery, who would be placed in positions whence they could deal with this part of the battle effectually, throw the enemy's reserves on the defensive. Once we have stopped their attack and have got them fixed in one position, the rest ought to be comparatively easy.

We see, therefore, that we must accept more risk at the commencement of the fight and get the company forward, if possible without firing, to within effective range of the enemy. If we take a long time about it, the enemy will see us coming; he will be able to deploy

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a firing line to meet us, and instead of advancing under very slight hostile fire we may be exposed to a fire nearly as heavy as our own. Our company, therefore, would advance very rapidly over exposed ground, it would walk and run alternately on covered ground, it would not halt either to fire or to rest the men unless a halt was absolutely necessary, and it would be prepared to open fire with the correct range, probably less than 500 yards, at a moment's notice.

There will be two difficulties for the company to overcome which are peculiar to this type of attack. First, the exact position of the enemy will not be known or may change before our attack reaches him. Secondly, there will be an extra tendency to lose direction and conform to the front held by the enemy instead of maintaining the original front on which the company, with others, deployed. If this is not very carefully watched by company commanders the attack is liable to split up into two or more parts and move in divergent directions. In the ordinary encounter engagement, where the action of the opposing advanced guard has, more or less, created a definite front between the two opposing forces, the difficulty of direction does not occur to the same extent, because the disturbing influences are not so great. In an offensive-defensive battle our defensive position may be facing north, the enemy may be attacking it from the north; our attack delivered from the east of the defensive position may be directed north-west, and the enemy's reserves may attack from north to south. After dealing with the leading troops of the original attack and throwing them back, the companies on the western flank of our attack will be apt to advance in their original direction—in fact, it is difficult to see how they can do otherwise.

The remainder of our attack must change direction to

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the north to face the enemy's reserves, and there will be a gap formed in our attack at a critical moment. The most important point to bring out is that company commanders and the companies themselves will be required to act on their own initiative and deal with the situation so as to ensure that the attack is maintained and not thrown on the defensive. When we are engaged in an offensive-defensive operation our main idea is to attack, and at the close of the operation we ought to be no worse placed, in case of failure, than we should be in an ordinary attack. It is desirable, therefore, that the companies should be trained to change the direction of their attack to suit an occasion of this kind. The most expeditious way is to deploy one or more sections in the new direction and arrange for the sections originally in the firing line to follow in support.

Every effort will be made by the company to get as close as possible to the enemy without firing, and when fire is opened it should be well sustained so as to bring the enemy's attack to a standstill, throw him on the defensive and drive him back as quickly as possible.

The local counter-stroke is intended as a means of defence rather than offence. That is to say, if the enemy's attack is being pressed very hard and there is some fear that he may deliver a successful assault against the defenders, a local counter-stroke is delivered to throw him back, drive him from some advantageous fire position which he may have occupied and thus restore the battle for the defenders. It is possible that a local counter-stroke may be so effective that it will win the battle, or go a long way towards doing so.

Another type of counter-stroke is when the enemy have attacked the position and failed, and the army issues from the position and attacks. In this case all the preliminaries of the attack would be absent, the struggle would

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have been fought out between the defender's position and the nearest fire position occupied by the attack. In fact, the counter-stroke would practically commence at the fifth stage, the defenders having gained superiority of fire, and the company commanders would have to get their companies forward to a position close enough to assault the enemy. They would be doing exactly what the attack would have done if the latter had gained superiority of fire. When studying past battles numerous examples are found where, towards evening, an attack which has failed is lying out in the open, and seems to be at the mercy of a counter-stroke of this type, but it is difficult to recall more than one or two occasions when such a counter-stroke has been delivered. It is probable that the moral effect of the original attack has been so great that the defenders have been content with repulsing it. In almost every case the attack has been renewed and has succeeded later either there or in some other part of the field. There is no doubt, from a purely theoretical point of view, that if we try to balance the prospect of the success of an attack which has gained superiority of fire over the defenders and is about to advance and subsequently assault, as compared with that of a defence which has gained superiority of fire over the attack and proposes to deliver a counter-stroke out of the position, the advantage appears to be with the defenders. They have the commanding ground, their companies will not necessarily be mixed up, their reserves or what is left of them will be quite fresh, the attack has made its last effort and failed, and it appears as though it only wants a push to send it toppling over in defeat and ruin. Yet no one seems able to provide the necessary push, and no one suggests that every battle should commence on the defensive and end up with a counter-stroke of this nature. The fact is that we cannot rely entirely on theoretical

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arguments, however plausible they may be, because they are liable to be upset at any moment by human nature, which is ruled as much by moral as by physical effects. There is little doubt that the whole atmosphere of defence has a demoralizing influence on the troops and deprives them of that energy and dash which is essential for a successful attack. It is said that the British troops who had been employed for months in the trenches before Sevastopol were not good at attacking when first they found themselves fighting against the mutineers in India, and no doubt their long experience in what was, practically, a defensive rôle had deprived them temporarily of their natural dash.

In the old days, however, this form of counter-stroke was constantly practised with success by our troops, even though they fought in line and were opposed to troops who attacked in deep columns. The British troops watched the enemy's advance, waited until they were so close that every bullet would take effect, fired the only round they had in their muskets, and then charged with the bayonet. These fire and shock tactics were repeatedly successful against the best troops in Europe.

One often hears it stated that with modern weapons the defence has gained over the attack, and sitting in an armchair reading about a situation at the end of a great attack which has failed for the day one would be inclined to agree with this view. If, however, it was possible to visit the front line of attack and talk to the officers, non-commissioned officers and men, and then go over to the defender's trenches and talk to them, one would discover several reasons why the attack is better than the defence, and why to-morrow, or next day, those repulsed attackers will be marching forward through the defender's country with one more victory to emblazon on their colours.

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The next type of counter-stroke to consider is when the attack has gained superiority of fire over the defence and is moving forward in order to get close enough to assault the defender's position. The situation in this case is desperate so far as the defence is concerned and there are only two alternatives—one is to await the assault in the trenches and the other is to issue out of the trenches and assault the attackers. The first alternative appears to be out of the question. We have only to put ourselves in imagination in the position of the men in the trenches. They have been subject to such a heavy fire that they can no longer use their rifles with effect, they know the enemy are collecting to assault, they have an uneasy feeling that if the assault is repulsed by their own company it will succeed somewhere else and their line of retreat will be cut off. Is it better to sit in this trench and wait until the enemy's troops come pouring over the parapet, shouting and yelling and digging their bayonets into everything they meet, or is it better to rush forward over the parapet ourselves, down the slope beyond, shouting and yelling, and digging our bayonets into everybody we encounter? There is no occasion to answer this question. It is answered in the regulations, which lay down that the local counter-stroke is the life of the defence; in fact, it is the only way that the attack can be definitely repulsed by the defence.

A counter-stroke from the trenches, even when the enemy has gained superiority of fire and is moving forward to assemble for the assault, will save many a position and throw back the attack for the time being.

Before leaving the subject of the local counter-stroke we must inquire as to when it is to be delivered and whether it is better to deliver it from one part of a position rather than another.

There appears to be no object in delivering a local

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counter-stroke during the first two phases of the attack. It is only when the attack has been stopped temporarily by the fire of the defence, and must gain superiority of fire over the defence before it can advance farther, that the necessity for delivering a local counter-stroke would arise. We have seen already that some parts of the defender's position will be stronger than others; in the strong parts, where there is a good field of fire and a gentle slope suitable to the trajectory of the bullet, the attack will be at a disadvantage in the struggle for superiority of fire and may never gain it sufficiently to assemble for the assault. This is not the part of the defender's position where the counter-stroke is likely to be required, and even if successfully delivered the men, having driven back the front line of the attack, would be lying out in the open probably in a bad fire position and would certainly suffer terrible loss, and no book suggests what is going to happen to them afterwards. In the weak parts of the defensive position the attacking line, almost invariably owing to cover, is able to get much closer, and this is the locality for the counter-stroke. If the attacking line is allowed to remain in its fire position and obtain superiority of fire there is every prospect that this part of the position will be carried. There are two ways of preventing this: one is for the defenders, while the struggle for superiority of fire is in the balance, to gain temporary superiority of fire and then attack the enemy in front, advancing in a thick line, covering the ground with as few halts as possible and charging the enemy with the bayonet. If successful the defenders can occupy the position they have won; owing to the covered approach the attack can do them little harm and subsequently they can withdraw to their trenches. The other alternative, but a far more risky one for the safety of the position, is to wait until the attack has gained

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superiority of fire and is assembling for the assault. This form of counter-stroke would only be resorted to when several previous efforts as suggested above have failed. In this case the company would charge with the bayonet straight over the trenches.

In those parts of the position where the main defence will depend upon the success of local counter-strokes, the companies should be given an objective as regards the ground, as well as the enemy, before the counter-stroke is commenced. For this purpose it would be well to reconnoitre a good fire position in front of the general line of defence, and even improve it, so that when the blow has been delivered the companies will not find themselves lying out in a very exposed position where it is impossible for them even to use their rifles with effect, the enemy having established superiority of fire. Local counter-strokes have failed, frequently, to produce any permanent effect, either because they have gone too far, or because they have reached a position where they are unduly exposed to the enemy's fire; the enemy have then attacked and driven back the counter-stroke, and practically followed it into the main position.

When deciding upon the objective of a counter-stroke, so far as it can be done by studying the ground in front of the position, the company commander should bear in mind three factors which influence the situation:

(1) The line which the enemy may reach before being brought to a standstill by the fire of the defence, and beyond which the enemy cannot advance without obtaining superiority of fire.

(2) The line, perhaps in dead ground, where the attack, if it gains superiority of fire, is likely to assemble preparatory to the assault.

(3) A suitable fire position, always in advance of the last-mentioned line, which the counter-stroke can reach,

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and which can be supported later by fire from the main position if possible.

By not aiming at too much it is probable that the blow will be more permanently effective, it will be much easier to deliver, the losses will be greatly reduced, and if superiority of fire is obtained at once over the enemy in front, after his leading troops have been driven back by the counter-stroke, a further advance with a view to defeating the enemy and driving him back from this part of the battlefield can easily be initiated. The most important point to remember is that when everything has failed, and the enemy, having gained superiority of fire, is assembling close in front of the trenches for the final assault, he must be charged before he has time to charge himself. Furthermore, if one company commander sees another company on his right or left issuing from their trenches to charge, he must do the same with his company, whatever the situation in his immediate front may be. The only exception will be when the attackers in front of his company have been unable to gain superiority of fire, in which case the company would turn its fire upon the enemy in front of the company which with others is delivering the counter-stroke.

For example, we will suppose that No. 1 company is occupying a fire trench with a glacis slope in front of it extending for six or seven hundred yards, and that the attack has been brought to a standstill five hundred yards in front of the trenches, and, so far, has been unable to gain superiority of fire or advance any farther. In front of No. 2 company the ground is completely different, containing a good approach for the attack which has gained superiority of fire, and is assembling for the assault. It would be useless for the men of No. 1 company to issue out of their trenches, they would gain no better fire position, the enemy

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in front of them are too far away to assault, and they could hardly change direction half-left or half-right and assist the company on their flank without being subject to enfilade fire from the attack. If, however, such an operation is possible it is highly desirable, and might turn the scale definitely in favour of the counter stroke.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE COMPANY IN ATTACK

ATTACKS AT NIGHT AND AT DAWN

ATTACKS at night are made, as a rule, after all efforts have failed to carry the locality by day. There are, however, some exceptions to this rule, but curiously enough those attacks which have not been preceded by failure in daylight do not appear to have been so successful as the first mentioned. The whole object of night attacks is to avoid the heavy loss and possibility of repeated failure involved in a continued attack by day against a very strong defensive position. A night attack, however, is much more subject to moral than to actual physical failure, and since the first must produce the second it is advisable for us to consider the moral as well as the physical aspect of the case.

Night attacks were constantly employed during the Peninsular war when storming a fortress, and, apart from the question of casualties, there was a considerable element of surprise in such operations in those days. The besieging troops were drawn very close round the fortress, and, when a practicable breach had been made, it was possible to carry it by a sudden night attack before the full power of the defence could be assembled to repel it. We had many examples during the campaign in Manchuria where night attacks were made against entrenched positions, and although, as a rule, surprise in its strict sense was absent from these examples, it is stated that the constant

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repetition of operations of this nature wore out the troops who were defending the entrenchments, because they got no rest either by day or night. Here we see another example of the superiority of the attack over the defence, because the attack can rest their troops and only employ them for night work when the situation demands it, whereas the defence must always have troops disposed to repel a possible attack by night. It may be said that there is no reason why the defence should not deliver night counter-strokes, and thus keep the attack constantly on the alert, but in practice it is very rare that we find a defending army attempt such an operation.

So far as the actual company is concerned, night operations resolve themselves into two undertakings; one is to march the company in silence and in any formation that is required, along a road, track or across country, and the other is to deliver an assault with the bayonet. What the company, usually in conjunction with other companies, must aim at is to reach the end of the fourth stage of an ordinary daylight attack and assault the position. If we follow the fortunes of a company engaged upon such an operation we may be able to ascertain some of the difficulties which are likely to arise, and the best manner of overcoming them.

Perhaps the most important of these difficulties is the general atmosphere of mystery and fear of surprise which envelops the operations, and which affects the nerves of the men more than any operation by day. In his earliest childhood the ordinary individual is afraid of the dark; even the information that the angel is doing sentry go over his bed only partially reassures him, because he cannot see the angel. Gradually, however, either a stronger belief in the angel, or the growth of his reasoning powers, or habit, or all of these together, overcome this fear, and although he might not like to

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wander round the garden at night, he does not mind his mother putting out the candle when she has tucked him up in bed and leaving him in a dark room. Some people are also affected, more or less, by superstitious fears in the dark, but these have little or no effect on the soldier in war. The homely old ghost, that no one in their senses has ever seen, would be a far more welcome apparition during night operations than a flesh and blood enemy with a magazine rifle and a bayonet. We can tell the child with perfect truth that there is no more danger in the dark when he is safely tucked up in his cot than there is in broad daylight, but we cannot tell this to the soldier, because it is not true, and he knows it as well as we do. We can tell the child about the angel, which may have some effect in calming his nerves, but such an argument might not appeal to a soldier. Then we come to habit, which both in the child and in the soldier is probably the most powerful antidote to overstrung nerves. The habit of working at night will, without any doubt, go a long way towards putting the men in as good a mental condition for night operations as they are by day. If, in addition, they have experienced a heavy attack and witnessed the losses that have occurred, they will realise the tremendous saving in life which operations by night ensure. Even with the best arrangements which can be made by the defence, their power of killing or wounding the attack is limited to a few yards in front of their rifles and to a bayonet charge. This is so much the case that, with carefully entrenched defensive positions, numerous obstacles will be erected with the intention of disorganizing the attack before it can get close enough to assault the trenches, and outposts will be placed close behind such obstacles to break up the attack still further by a heavy and accurately aimed fire. It is interesting in this

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connection to note that some of the night attacks delivered by the Japanese in the Manchurian campaign were initiated because the attack by day was unable to pass the obstacles constructed in front of the Russian trenches. Another condition which is apt to affect the nerves of the men is the absolute silence which must be maintained during the advance. Every one speaks in a whisper, and such means of communication always seem to increase the tension on the nerves of the troops. It may be said that since it is rarely possible to surprise the enemy so much silence is unnecessary. It would be a great mistake, however, to allow the enemy to discover the exact position of the advancing attack, because in that case it would not be difficult for him to send out small bodies of troops to open a heavy fire on it from a flank, which would be liable to paralyse any further advance. Although we may not be able to hide from the enemy the fact that we are advancing to attack him, he will not know the exact direction from which we are coming, or the exact place where we shall deliver the assault. Whispering, however, hardly seems necessary, provided all conversation is reduced to the greatest possible extent and limited to passing orders, which if given in a low tone of voice cannot be heard for more than a few yards, and does not produce any nervous effect upon the recipient or those who are close by.

There are some compensations to the above disadvantages of night work, perhaps the chief one, from the point of view of the individual, being that the men are all in close formation, very much as they used to fight, either by day or night, a hundred years ago. The same initiative is not required from individual men by night as it is by day, because they move with their company or section in one formed body; what we do require is the strictest discipline, and here we are assisted by the natural

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desire of each individual not to give any warning to the enemy of our approach, because such warning will only increase our difficulties later on. Another compensation is the great saving of life; and another, the most important of all from every point of view, is the probability of the operation being more likely to be successful by night than by day.

There is no doubt, however, that there is a risk of disaster and every man in the attack knows it. We are apt to credit the enemy with being able to do things which he cannot or at least does not do. We forget that if our nerves are highly strung the enemy will be in a much worse condition, and that if he has been subject to these night attacks for some time he will be suffering from want of rest. If our men are carefully trained in night work, and by frequent practice become accustomed to the "atmosphere" of night operations, so far as it is possible to create that atmosphere in peace without an actual enemy in front of us, and are trained also to meet and overcome the various difficulties that will arise, the prospect of success will be greatly increased. During the Manchurian campaign, excluding attacks on Port Arthur, about half of the numerous night attacks were successful, about a quarter were partially successful, and the remainder failed.

We will now consider the difficulties that may arise during the progress of a night attack, and these can be summarized as follows:

(*a*) To discover and follow in the dark the correct direction.

(*b*) To discover the position of the enemy's trenches, including any outposts which may be thrown out in front.

(*c*) To deal with any unexpected opposition which may be encountered before getting close enough to assault the enemy.

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(*d*) To conceal the strength and direction of the attack.

(*e*) To overcome any natural obstacles which may be met with.

(*f*) To force a passage through artificial obstacles placed in front of the enemy's position.

(*g*) To make quite sure that we have got close enough to the enemy's trenches before delivering the assault.

(*h*) To meet a counter-stroke from the position when our attack has assembled for the assault.

(*i*) The formation to adopt when advancing to the attack and when delivering the assault.

(*j*) The maintenance of the formation ordered, especially as regards keeping touch with other companies to the right and left, or in front and rear.

(*k*) The employment of scouts.

The direction of the advance, which involves a careful reconnaissance of the ground in daylight, is decided upon, as a rule, by higher commanders and their staff, but it is desirable that the company as a whole should be able to find its way without difficulty from one place to another, because when acting as an outpost company it may be required to conduct a night attack entirely by itself, and even when taking part in such an operation with larger forces the attack is far more likely to succeed if every one knows how it is conducted. For a simple scheme, which would be suitable for a company acting by itself, we will suppose that the advanced guards of the opposing forces have met and have been fighting during the afternoon The enemy's advanced guard was thrown on the defensive and we attacked it. The position occupied by the enemy's advanced guard happened to be very strong, and after occupying a fire position in front of it we were unable to gain superiority of fire before darkness set in. Five hundred yards away from the enemy's left flank

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there is a small hill which possesses an excellent field of fire to the front but which could not be held by more than fifty men. If we can gain possession of this hill it will materially assist us in any further attacks, because from it part of the enemy's position would be enfiladed. The opposing advanced guards are facing each other about five hundred yards apart with a stream running between them, and this hill is about nine hundred yards to the right front of our advanced guard. Before darkness sets in our company receives an order to advance at midnight and capture this small hill, which is believed to be defended by not more than fifty men. It is not known whether there are any outposts in front of this hill or not.

It would be good training for the company to be given a scheme of this nature, with the necessary details to suit the actual training ground, and for the company commander to indicate to the men on the ground the best method of fixing landmarks by day which could be recognized by night. The men would take a great interest in the work and it would teach them how to find their own way over strange ground at night. We will follow the operation right through. First the captain himself, or one of the company officers, accompanied by some of the company scouts, would go forward by daylight as far as possible, fix landmarks, discover the positions of any outposts, and from the farthest point they could reach ascertain the compass bearing to the small hill, and take the range. Before commencing this reconnaissance the captain would consider the best general direction for the company to advance, having in mind the nature of the ground to be traversed, the desirability of avoiding the flank of the enemy's advance guard which is lying out five hundred yards in front, and how far any natural or artificial features of the ground will assist in

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maintaining the direction if the advance is made from one place rather than from another.

Taking an example as it would be worked out during company training the captain assembles the company on the right flank of our imaginary advanced guard, reads out the scheme, points out the position 500 yards ahead occupied by the enemy's imaginary advanced guard, and indicates the fire position occupied by our own imaginary advanced guard. He then proceeds to point out that if we advance from here straight towards the hill we may run against the flank of the enemy's advanced guard, which we know is out there (pointing to the locality). It will be better, therefore, for us to start from a place farther to the right. Before leaving this spot, however, let us see if we can discover any landmarks which we could recognize in the dark, and which we should pass on our road. The ground from here to the hill is perfectly open, and if our scouting party starts from here it will be seen all the way by the enemy, and will not get very far. This open ground extends also for some three hundred yards in front of the hill, and then we see some trees, some scrub, and what appears to be a bank running from the direction of the hill to a point about five hundred yards to our right. We will go to this bank presently and ascertain if it will be of any use to us as a line of direction at night. In any case it will be a better starting-point for the patrol we are sending out in the daylight, because there is a good deal of cover afforded by the trees and bushes. The next matter we must decide is whether, if we go to the edge of the open ground, we shall be able to distinguish the hill in front of us at night. Some distance behind the hill we see that the ground rises considerably, and it is probable that the outline of the hill will be obscured by the dark background of the high ground in rear, and so we may have to march on it by a

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compass bearing. Having discovered all we can from this locality, and having decided upon the best starting-point for our patrol, we will now move off to the right and gain the bank. First, however, we will select a line of advance for our patrol from here to the bank so that the enemy will not see it going out. If the patrol advances straight from here to the bank, the men must cross the open ground which we see about two hundred yards away on our right; if, however, we move a hundred yards farther back, we shall reach some scrub, and the patrol can work through that without being seen.

The company would follow the movements of the patrol until the bank is reached, the section commanders explaining to the men the reasons for everything that they do, and pointing out any mistakes which are made. The company commander would then explain that the starting-place for the company at night could be anywhere to the right of the bank, because a line drawn from the place where the company is standing near the bank to the hill would not approach the flank of the enemy's advanced guard. The company would then follow the patrol along the bank, watching how it moves from cover to cover in the manner suggested in Chapter XXI. As the patrol advances the various landmarks, if any, would be pointed out to the company, so that the men can learn what is likely to be seen and what could not be recognized at night. We will suppose that the ground on the left of the bank is perfectly open, but on the right it is covered with scrub and bushes. By day the patrol would move through the scrub on the right of the bank, otherwise the men would be seen; but by night the company would advance on the left of the bank for choice, because they could not be seen in the dark, and it would be much easier to get forward quietly, and to maintain the correct direction, than if they moved through the scrub and

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bushes to the right of the bank. After going a hundred yards down the bank, it is found to bear to the left and no longer leads direct towards the hill, as it appeared to do from where we saw it first, but some distance to the left of the hill as we face the latter. It is evident that we must cross the bank and enter the scrub on the right side of it, but the bank has a deep ditch full of water alongside it, which would be difficult to cross at night.

The patrol will measure the width of the bank, so that some planks can be fastened together, and brought with the company at night, to form a small bridge. The patrol must now fix the exact place where the company will cross the bank and ditch, so that it can be recognized in the dark. The surest way of doing this is to pace the distance down the bank from the starting-point, and if there is any landmark on the spot, such as a big bush, that would be an additional safeguard. It might be possible to place some object like a stone, or bundle of sticks, which could be seen at night at the crossing-place, but such marks are not very reliable, and may be discovered by the enemy.

The next task before the patrol is to find some object which can be seen at night, and which will direct the company towards the hill. The hill itself can be seen from here, but the high ground behind it will render it invisible at night; unfortunately there is no dent or peculiar shape in the skyline behind the hill which could be recognized at night, so the only thing to do is to take a compass bearing on to the hill. The patrol then follows this compass bearing, and, after advancing through the scrub for two hundred yards, finds that the ground is getting very boggy and wet; shortly afterwards the stream is reached. One man of the patrol tries to wade through it and immediately sinks up to his shoulders in the mud, and is pulled out by his comrades. It is evidently out

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of the question for the company to cross here. It would be better to find a suitable crossing-place to the right rather than to the left, because the company would be farther away from the flank of the enemy's advanced guard. The patrol then moves along the stream, and fifty yards to the right finds a place where the stream is wider, but not so deep, and has a firm bottom where men can cross by wading up to their waists. The patrol then moves still farther along the stream and finds a better place than the last.

Our patrol has now gone a hundred yards from the place where they first struck the stream, and their original compass bearing is no longer of any use. As the place where the bank was crossed is no longer visible the patrol must go back to it and endeavour to fix a line from the bank to the ford, and find the compass bearing on which the company can march at night. If the patrol is undisturbed by the enemy they will be able to do this without much trouble. The officer would know the original compass bearing, he could guess the angle between that bearing and the stream, he would know the distance to the stream and the distance the patrol marched along the stream, and from those data he could calculate roughly the new compass bearing. He would then march on that bearing, and if he struck the stream too much to the right or too much to the left he could make the necessary alteration in the bearing.

We will suppose that a few yards after crossing the stream the scrub comes to an end and there is perfectly open ground up to the hill, which is four hundred yards away and covered with bushes and scrub. Although this open ground up to the hill would be a disadvantage in an attack by day it is exactly the reverse by night, because the enemy on the hill will not be able to see to fire at the company, which will have no difficulty in crossing it in the dark.

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The patrol now investigates the hill, first with the object of discovering the dispositions of the enemy, and secondly to ascertain if there is any landmark which will be visible at night and which will serve as a guide to the company, leading it straight to the hill. The patrol notices that there is a marked dent in the line of the high ground which is in rear of the hill and can be seen just over the top of it. This will be visible at night if the weather is clear, but as an additional safeguard a compass bearing is taken to the hill. The company commander asks some of the men if they think that this dent would be a good mark to march on at night. No doubt the answers will vary, but there is one reason why it would be quite unsuitable in this particular case, and this will be explained to the men. The dent on the skyline beyond the hill appears just over the top of the hill we are going to attack, and this dent is clearly visible from where we are standing and would be visible, no doubt, at night, but if we were to advance towards the hill the skyline behind the hill would slowly disappear and the dent would be visible no longer, and consequently, as a point of direction, it would be useless. Undesirable landmarks of this nature will be met with frequently and must be avoided.

There is no sign of the enemy on the hill, so ought the patrol to cross the open ground and try to get on to the hill? This is one of the many difficult questions which have to be dealt with by junior officers and non-commissioned officers placed in command of a patrol, and will be discussed in Chapter XXI, on the training of company scouts. They arise sometimes because the instructions to the patrol when it is first sent out have not been sufficiently explicit. We will assume, in this case, that the patrol has been ordered definitely not to go to the hill provided sufficient information can be

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obtained as regards the route to be followed to ensure that the company can be led straight to the hill. The patrol has been able to discover this, except as regards one very important point—the exact distance from the edge of the scrub to the hill has not been ascertained. The patrol should have been accompanied by two range-takers so that this information could be obtained. It is very rare that a patrol can get right up to the place where the troops are going to attack, and it is important to know the distance. In this case the patrol must guess the distance.

We can now deal with the advance and the subsequent attack of the company; we know a great deal about the ground but practically nothing about the enemy, we have taken certain precautions to ensure that we cross the ground in the right direction, and we must now take precautions regarding the enemy. The exact time of night when the attack is to be delivered does not appear to matter very much so long as it is dark; the enemy's outposts are just as likely to be alert after midnight as they are before. If they are expecting an attack they will probably be more active with their patrols during the early hours of the morning. One advantage in attacking before midnight is that the company will have plenty of time to entrench their position on the hill before they are exposed to an attack by day. On the other hand, if the hill is carried early in the night the enemy will realize that their left flank is in danger and will be prepared to deal with the situation in good time. It is probable in this case that the company would be ordered to assault an hour before dawn, say at 3.30 A.M.

The company commander must decide how long it will take him to reach the position for assault, overcoming any obstacles that he may encounter or any difficulties as regards the enemy's outposts. He will probably like

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to get to the edge of the scrub in good time and wait there, if all goes well, until it is time to cross the open space and assault the hill. The drawback to this is that the men will be subject to the peculiar atmosphere of night work for a somewhat lengthy period, and perhaps it would be better to send scouts to the edge of the wood and move the company later.

We will suppose that the company has reached the end of the bank where the patrol originally started from, and is now about to commence its night advance towards the hill. The company scouts who have been sent forward to the stream have sent back to say that they have discovered a hostile piquet about two hundred yards to the right of the ford where the company is to cross, and hostile patrols have been seen moving through the scrub towards the company.

The company commander decides to adhere to his original plan, and cross the stream at the ford, while the route is still unguarded by the enemy. Scouts will remain between the ford and the enemy's piquet on both sides of the stream, and will also move through the scrub on the right side of the bank, keeping level with the company, other scouts being sent straight ahead towards the ford. There appears to be no reason why the remainder of the company should not advance along the left side of the bank in fours; in fact, this formation might be retained until the stream is reached, so long as the scouts can be relied upon to give warning of an approaching enemy. If, however, there is any danger of hostile patrols running into the company, the best formation would be in column of sections moving to a flank in fours, or with two sections leading in columns of fours, and two sections in fours following in rear. In this formation the company could deploy and assault with the bayonet very rapidly. Whatever formation is decided

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upon the deployment should be practised by the company before leaving the outpost line, so that every man would know exactly what he had to do when the order was given.

Having reached the crossing-place at the bank, the planks would be laid across carefully, and non-commissioned officers posted on each side to prevent men from missing their footing and falling into the ditch. When the whole company has got over, the compass bearing will be referred to and the advance will continue to the ford, with scouts still in front and on the right flank of the company. Meanwhile the company commander would be considering his course of action when he reaches the ford: should he move straight on towards the hill and ignore the enemy's piquet, or should he attack the piquet first and then move on towards the hill? That is a tactical problem which he must decide himself and forms no part of company training. It may be suggested, however, that if he gets safely over the stream he is very well placed to attack the piquet, and drive it away from the hill, that it is extremely unlikely that he will be able to get near enough to assault the enemy on the hill without the latter discovering his approach, and that therefore, as regards secrecy, there is no serious objection to an attack being made on the piquet before dealing with the hill. If, on the other hand, he leaves the piquet alone there will be an uneasy feeling in his own mind and in the minds of the men, throughout the subsequent advance and assault, that the enemy's piquet is coming up behind them, and this feeling may possibly wreck the enterprise.

We will assume, therefore, that he decides to attack the piquet. On reaching the ford the company commander would make his dispositions for crossing; no doubt he would order one section to face the enemy's

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piquet, which is the nearest source of disturbance, on the far side of the stream and one on the near side. The remaining two sections crossing to the far side, followed eventually by the last section. We will suppose that the crossing was effected without serious difficulty, the only mishap being that three men, unaccustomed to ford a stream at night, tripped up and fell with a loud splash in the water.

The company commander, having decided to attack the piquet, must consider whether the whole company is to be used for the purpose or whether it is desirable to send only part of the company. Piquets, as a rule, are not very strong; this particular piquet is being attacked on its weakest flank, because if the attack is successful the piquet will be driven directly away from its own friends. It is probable that, as a more serious enterprise is to be undertaken shortly, it would be best to employ two or at most three sections, the remainder of the company will stay and guard the ford, keep off patrols from the direction of the hill or from any other hostile piquet that may be discovered on the left, and send out patrols towards the hill and down the stream to the left.

So far the scouts have been unable to locate the exact position of the enemy's piquet, but state that it is about two hundred yards along the stream, and not far from the bank on the enemy's side. The company now commences its advance towards the piquet covered by scouts, these scouts are ordered to go a hundred yards to the front, halt, and send back to say that they have reached that distance. Meanwhile the company, or whatever number of sections has been decided upon, say three, will follow in rear. It would be best for the company to march clear of the bushes and scrub which grow along the bank of the stream, and adopt a formation which would enable them to rush any opposition that may be

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encountered. The handiest formation as regards getting over ground is for each section to be in fours, that is, column of sections moving to a flank; the deployment is not difficult to complete in a few seconds, and if there is rough ground to cross, or obstacles like large bushes to pass, each section can get forward in very good order, and can keep at deploying distance from the section on the flank without difficulty. Another formation which was tried in Manchuria is column of sections moving straight to the front, each section in line. Another formation, also tried in Manchuria, is the whole company in line. From repeated trials in peace during the last six years there appears to be no serious difficulty in moving a large force, certainly up to two battalions at peace strength, in line; that is to say, two battalions deployed in one long line. This has been done repeatedly on the darkest nights and over very rough ground with banks and deep ditches, but not hedges. A lot of the men tumble into the ditches, but, with care, these obstacles do not appear to break up the line or to cause it to change direction.

There is one error which invariably creeps in, and can be legislated for without difficulty. When the advance is made in line, the companies farthest away from the directing point always get ahead of that point. For example, if two companies are advancing in line, the left flank of the right company being the directing point, the outer flanks of both companies will get ahead of the inner flanks, and eventually the two companies will have swung out of the true direction. If the left flank of the left company was directing, the whole line would gradually change direction towards the left, the right constantly going faster than the left.

This is caused by the constant halts or checks during the advance; the directing officer or non-commissioned

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officer halts or checks, and the man next him does the same, only an instant later, this goes on all along the line, with the result that the flank man does not feel the check for some seconds and during those seconds he has been advancing whilst the directing man has been standing still. When a company is halted the signal is given to the directing flank to advance, the men on the outer flank pick up the movement quicker than they do when the company is advancing and the directing flank is ordered to halt, because in the first case the men hear the movement on their flank, whereas there is no sound when a man halts. The result is that the error caused by the directing flank being halted or checked is not quite corrected by the error caused by the directing flank moving after it has halted. This error is further increased by the fact that very slight checks do not reach the flank men at all; for example, the directing man checks for two seconds and during those two seconds the flank man marches two or three feet, he never feels the check and the right flank of the company has been brought up two feet out of its true alignment. It is quite easy for the directing officer during a short halt to march on a compass bearing from the directing flank down the line, getting the men to fall back as he comes along. This error is not so apparent in any column formation; perhaps the errors caused by the alternate halts and moves balance each other better in column than in line.

The error, if not checked, becomes very marked as the force advances, and finally there is danger that part of the line may mistake another part for the enemy, especially if each converge on the top of a hill from nearly opposite sides at the same time, because the tendency to climb straight up the slope of a hill instead of diagonally across the slope might increase the error.

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It is a good test of marching in line by night to deploy the company in line near the foot of a hill, but not directly facing the slope, and endeavour to march in the direction in which it originally faced. For example, suppose we deploy our company directly facing the slope and then form quarter-right and move forward direct to our front If we are marching by the left there will be a constant tendency to crowd towards the left-hand man, and for the company gradually to return to its orginal alignment directly facing the slope, the right having come forward. If we do the same, and march by our right flank, there will be a constant tendency to draw away from the directing flank and for the left to fall back, the alignment eventually directly facing the slope. We see at once that if the marching alignment of the company has been thrown out by previous checks or halts, and has not been corrected, the error is likely to be increased directly a slope, especially a steep slope, is encountered. The disadvantage of section columns as compared with line formations is that the men have to deploy before rushing the enemy, and in cases where previous reconnaissance shows that the ground is very even and fairly level it would be better to adopt line formations so far as the individual company is concerned.

We will now return to our company which is feeling its way in the dark against an enemy they have not yet been able to locate with sufficient accuracy to arrange for the final advance and the assault. We observe that we have no compass bearing to guide us, because this part of the operation was not contemplated when the daylight reconnaissance was made; in fact, it is probable that the enemy's outposts were not in position at the time. The only thing to do is for the scouts, who have discovered the enemy's piquet, to lead the company.

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After proceeding about fifty yards information comes back that the scouts have gained a hundred yards from the ford and are halted, and that they have heard some one moving about in the scrub in front of them. Directly after this a few rapid shots are heard in front and then all is quiet. It is ascertained that the shots were fired by a hostile patrol who have retired. The scouts are ordered to advance fifty yards and again report, the company following in rear. The scouts having advanced fifty yards farther, those on the left report they hear something on their left front. It is evident that the company cannot attack the piquet until it discovers where it is, and the only way to do this appears to be to draw their fire, and this can only be done by the scouts. Otherwise the company may go wandering about all night and eventually, without any great difficulty, may lose its way completely. Probably the best thing to be done is for the scouts to move forward half-left and if they hear anything more open a rapid magazine fire. That will probably make the enemy's piquet reply, and once he has replied and disclosed his position it will not be difficult for the company commander to form up his sections facing in the correct direction, move forward still covered by his scouts until he is close enough to charge, and then assault the enemy. Of course it is far better, if possible, for the scouts to discover the exact position of the piquet without any firing, and the attack may then come as a surprise.

This little manœuvre on the part of the company has been introduced partly to enable us to discuss formations and the action of the scouts, but chiefly to show how very difficult it is to make a night attack unless we know for certain the exact position of the enemy. Both officers and men are now so good at night work, and the companies and battalions move about with such precision as

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regards formation and such accuracy as regards time, even on the darkest nights and over very rough ground, that there is a temptation on the part of those who are conducting the training to complicate the schemes and introduce a certain amount of manœuvre. In fact, in some cases the troops are called upon to carry out extensive operations which are quite easy by day but which appear to be extremely difficult and hazardous at night. So far as can be judged from the information available regarding the night attacks in the Manchurian campaign, and that information is fairly extensive, there was not a single occasion when a night attack was ordered where the Japanese did not know exactly where the enemy was located, and where the intention was to march to that place and nowhere else, and attack there and nowhere else.

This is the reason why night work is so peculiarly favourable for attack after failure by day. The opposing sides have come to close grips, the attack know exactly the locality of the enemy's trenches in front; they know, in all probability, whether there are any artificial obstacles in front of those trenches, and they know what the ground is like between them and the enemy's trenches. This brings us to what is perhaps the most important point of all in connection with night operations, namely, the best part of the enemy's position to attack. When we come to study the defence of a position by day we shall see that some parts of it are bound to be stronger than other parts. In one locality there is a perfect glacis slope in front of the trenches which extends for six hundred or seven hundred yards and which must be traversed by the attack. We know that this is a very strong part of the position and will not require so many men to defend it as the weaker parts, where there is a good deal of cover and where the attack will be able to

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establish a good fire position very close to the trenches, and, although there are several natural obstacles between the trenches and this fire position, there is a good deal of dead ground which will help the attack to assemble for assault.

Let us consider which of these parts of the position is best for a night attack. Certainly not the broken ground with the obstacles, although it is close to the enemy's position and provides the attack with such good covering fire from the excellent fire position available. The covering fire and the good fire position are useless at night, and so is the broken ground. But let us look at the glacis slope: this, so formidable by day, is ideal for night work; the ground is level, the only difficulties we have to overcome are to advance within assaulting distance and deliver our assault. These difficulties are quite sufficient without introducing complicated manœuvres over difficult ground, where we risk loss of direction, and, instead of surprising the enemy, are apt to be surprised by him, or perhaps even by some other part of our own force. Nevertheless, advancing over difficult ground is very good practice, and no doubt carrying out a sort of field day at night is also good practice, but the latter is not such good practice as the former, because we do things that we could not do in war and learn wrong lessons, with the result that when war comes we might try to do too much.

Our company has been engaged, so far, in manœuvres. Its original object was a perfectly legitimate task, to advance over some difficult ground, then cross a perfectly open strip of country, and finally assault a small hill which would not hold more than fifty men. The company, however, has been drawn away by a hostile piquet, it has been searching for this piquet for some time, and we have supposed that it has found it. We will

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assume that it has charged the piquet and dispersed it, and is about to enter upon its original task.

Anyone who reads this will think probably that the company has already done quite enough, or quite as much as it can be expected to do in one night, and he would be perfectly right. There is very little doubt that if we wish to carry out a night attack with success, and if we have reason to believe that the enemy has placed outposts so far in front of his position that they are not part and parcel of that position, then we must undertake two distinct operations, and employ different troops for each. The first operation is to locate the enemy's outpost companies and assault them. The board having been swept clear of these obstructions, we must employ a fresh force to advance against the enemy's trenches and carry them by assault. We may still have obstacles, and even outposts, to encounter, but they will be so close to our objective that they will form part of that objective. There will be no marching about and losing our way, or suffering from any uncertainty as to where the enemy is to be found. In the case we have been studying it would have been far better to employ two companies, one to discover and clear away any outposts in front of the hill, and the other to advance from the ford straight to the hill.

We will now follow the attack against the hill. The ground is quite open, fairly level, and we have an accurate compass bearing to guide us, the only thing we are not sure about is the distance from the ford to the hill, because the patrol did not take a rangefinder with them when they were reconnoitring during daylight and had to guess the distance.

There appears to be no reason why the company should not advance in line, although, for the sake of training, it might commence the advance in line of section columns in fours and change later into line. The scouts should be

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ordered as before to proceed a hundred yards to the front and then halt until the company closes up to within twenty yards or so, when the scouts would make another advance, shortening the distance each time until the enemy's position is approached. When the scouts get to within what is believed to be about a hundred yards from the position they report that there is a wire entanglement thirty yards in front of them; the company is immediately ordered to lie down, and probably a blaze of fire will burst out from behind the entanglement. The men must be trained that they are on no account to return this fire, because they will only be shooting their own scouts who are guarding their safety in front, and the fire of their rifles will give an accurate target to the enemy. A few men are then sent forward with the necessary tools, which we will hope have not been forgotten, and these men as soon as the first burst of fire is over will creep forward into the obstacle and commence cutting, lying on their backs to do so. They need not be afraid of a bayonet counter-stroke, because the defenders will not charge into their own obstacle; even the fire that is being directed at them is bound to be badly aimed, and the situation in any case is not as bad as it appears. If we could transfer ourselves in spirit to the enemy in the trenches behind the obstacle we should obtain great comfort from studying their feelings.

Having made four passages through the obstacle, a section should be passed through each passage and the company lined up on the far side. Every movement being made if possible during a lull in the enemy's fire. Even if the enemy display a flare in front of their position to light up the attack, it will not be easy by that uncertain light for them to aim at the men cutting the obstacle, and if the machine-gun has been brought out it could come into action against the flare and should be able to disturb

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its mechanism, or at least knock down the shade which prevents the flare from showing up the defenders as well the attackers.

We now come to the critical part of the attack; the company has got the enemy's trenches in front and the obstacle behind, it is a simple thing to say that they must jump up and rush the enemy's trenches with the bayonet. The attack has not got superiority of fire over the defenders, as it has in a similar case by day; the defenders are not nervous about putting their heads over the top of their trenches to fire at the attack, and it appears that the defence has the best of it.

Perhaps in a small case, such as we are studying where one company is attacking by itself, the situation may appear to be very difficult, but even here a whole company should be able to assault a small detachment of only fifty men, who no doubt feel themselves to be very isolated out on this hill. It appears to be quite useless for the attack to commence firing at the enemy's trenches; once they do that they will never get up and assault, and daylight will find them lying out in the open twenty or thirty yards from an enemy's trenches, with no cover of any kind, and still with the obstacle behind them.

Here is where our peace training comes in; our forefathers stormed a narrow breach in face of a deadly fire, with the slain piled up in heaps all round them. They had the ditch of the fortress behind them; if the assault failed, and they were tumbled back into the ditch, they were shot down from the galleries arranged in the walls of the ditch. What we have got to do to-day is no more difficult than what out great-grandfathers did a hundred years ago, and the danger is not very great if we are all determined to carry it through. It is like having a tooth drawn, it is over in a minute, and then we can take a pull at our water-bottles and congratulate

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ourselves upon having maintained the gallant reputation of the British soldier. We can each feel that we have been called upon to carry out a difficult and dangerous task in the middle of the night, and that we have brought our best energies and our finest soldierly qualities to bear on the work, and have won through in spite of the efforts of a brave enemy to prevent us.

When we are practising these operations in peace time we cannot realize half the difficulties and dangers which loom so large in the middle of the night in war, but we can, and do, get into the habit of working at night, and this will take us a long way towards victory when the enemy is in front of us.

The system of keeping the correct interval and alignment with other companies during a night march is a matter for battalion rather than company training, but it would be as well to practise the company in this so as to be ready for battalion training. Distances from front to rear can be kept by ropes or by single men sent forward in a string. Intervals from flank to flank can be kept by single men, ropes are unsuitable because, although they can be carried end on through or over any obstacles, they would catch in bushes, rocks, &c., if stretched across in line with the troops.

The usual method of sending out these connecting files is to tell off one section of the company to provide them. We will suppose that the battalion is advancing with half the battalion deployed in front, and the other half deployed and following it thirty paces in rear, the right of the leading half-battalion directing. The right section of the right company of the rear half-battalion would send out six men each to follow the other at five paces distance. The leading man would be told to keep close touch with the right flank of the company in front, each man following would be ordered

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never to lose sight of the man in front of him but to go closer if he cannot see as far as five paces. The main point is that the chain should never be broken. When the sixth man has gone out the company will advance, the directing flank always keeping five paces in rear of the sixth connecting file. If for any reason this distance is increased, a seventh connecting file will go forward immediately, and will be followed by an eighth, and ninth if necessary. Similarly if the company overtakes the sixth man he will rejoin his section, but he will be prepared to go forward again without any further orders directly the distance is increased.

For example, the leading company may check at an obstacle and the company in rear will close up a little before it discovers what has occurred, and the connecting files will come in one by one. The leading company having passed the obstacle will again move forward, and the company in rear will be checked at the obstacle; the distance between the two companies will now increase and additional connecting files will go out automatically. All that is necessary is to tell the men of the section the order in which they are to go out and the distance they are to maintain from the man in front of them, and impress upon them that the chain is never to be broken. Connection with the company on the flank, or between two or more sections advancing in fours alongside each other, can be maintained in exactly the same manner.

With the rope system from front to rear the right-hand man of the leading company carries the end of the rope, which has a knot in it every ten yards. The right-hand man of the company in rear pays out the rope until the desired distance is gained, and he takes in or pays out rope as he advances according to the requirements of the pace. When the distance is more than ten yards between companies, men should be placed every ten

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yards—namely, at every knot—to carry the rope and prevent it from dragging along the ground and getting caught in some obstruction.

We can now turn to a form of tactics known under the name of "An Attack at Dawn." As stated in the regulations "dawn" is a vague term and should be avoided, but it is not easy to find any other word which will explain the type of attack we propose to make. Whether the vagueness of the term has communicated itself to the operation or not one cannot say, but there is no doubt that many officers have somewhat obscure ideas as to what definite object they are aiming at when they practise an attack at dawn. It is desirable, therefore, to consider what can and what cannot be done on such an occasion, what advantages are to be gained, and what arrangements must be made to ensure success.

It appears that an attack at dawn is rarely contemplated unless the opposing forces have been engaged, and as a rule closely engaged, during the previous day. The object of the operation in that case is to make an advance under cover of darkness, and either continue the attack at dawn from the locality gained, or assault at dawn if the advance has reached a line sufficiently close to the enemy's position to render such an operation possible. Perhaps we have got mixed up between the words "attack" at dawn and "assault" at dawn, because they do not mean the same thing. The object of a night advance, either to initiate or continue an attack as soon as it is light enough to see, is easily understood, and the latter but not the former is dealt with in the regulations.

The idea of initiating an attack at dawn hardly appears to be a feasible operation of war; we should not know enough about the enemy's position or the ground to enable us to dispose our infantry and artillery in a manner which would bear the light of day. The idea

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of continuing an attack at dawn is quite a different matter. Our force has been engaged on the previous day, the attacking troops are bivouacking on the ground, the artillery are all in position ready to continue the fight as soon as it is light enough to see, and it is not difficult to arrange a night advance so that the infantry shall be placed much nearer to the enemy at dawn than they were at sunset on the previous day. Some new positions might be occupied even by the guns if these positions had been reconnoitred during daylight.

The situation which will confront the infantry in high latitudes, where there is a long twilight, is very interesting. They will be able to see the main features of the ground before they can see to use their rifles; after a few minutes they will be able to see objects quite clearly and still be unable to see over their sights. A few minutes later they will be able to see well enough to shoot, but it will be still some minutes later before the artillery will be able to see well enough to use their guns. During these fleeting minutes the infantry ought to be able to do a good deal in the way of advancing and continuing the attack, especially if the ground is very much exposed to hostile artillery fire or if, owing to the nature of the country, the enemy's artillery fire is more effective than our own. Having reached the termination of the night advance the attack would be deployed, the firing line no doubt being at its full strength. The attack would have reached a position in front of the enemy with all its companies in perfect order, none of the sections or groups mixed up, and every one under his own commander.

The deployment, no doubt, would be carried out under cover of darkness, and directly it was light enough to see the attack would advance. There is no object in making rushes, because the enemy's fire, even if attempted,

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would be very erratic, so there is no reason why whole companies should not move together. Every company commander would be endeavouring to obtain two important advantages over the defence, one would be to advance close enough to enable the attack to gain superiority of fire over the defence preparatory to the next move forward to reach a position close enough to assault, and the other would be to occupy a good fire position. If we have not yet gained superiority of fire over the defence, and we make a night advance so as to continue the attack at dawn, we must be quite sure where we are going and what the situation will be like when we get there. If we send forward an infantry attack and halt them in the open, in a position which they could not have reached in daylight without first gaining superiority of fire, we are not helping our attack forward, we are hindering it, because in such a position it is doubtful if the attack ever would gain superiority of fire. If, on the other hand, there is a good fire position on ahead and we could not have reached it in daylight, except with great loss, or without gaining superiority of fire, and if we had reached it we could not have maintained it efficiently owing to the exposed ground over which the reinforcements would have to advance, then there would be a definite object in going forward. The new firing line, deployed at full strength, might gain superiority of fire over the defence more quickly and more permanently than they could in a fire position farther back. We must be careful to remember, therefore, when making a night advance with a view to continuing the attack at dawn, that superiority of fire has still to be obtained, and that our company must get into a good position to obtain it—not too far back, but as close as the ground will permit.

A night advance with the object of delivering the

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assault at dawn appears to be a simpler task, because it presupposes that the enemy has no outposts, or else that the attack has got so close to the enemy's position on the previous day that outposts on either side were out of the question; both the attack and the defence watching their front by sentries and patrols, and the troops bivouacking in line of battle. Such an operation as regards previous arrangements requires careful timing more than anything else. It is undesirable and might be fatal to advance an assaulting line to within assaulting distance of the enemy's trenches and have to wait in that position more than an hour before it is light enough to see. On the other hand, if the assaulting line arrives too late it will come under a very heavy fire from the defence.

With the best arrangements timing may be upset by an unknown obstacle, and, considering everything, an assault at dawn does not appear to be such an effective operation as an assault by night. The latter can be carried out by quite a small part of the army, and directed against the enemy's most vital point. If it succeeds the success can be confirmed, partly under cover of darkness, but chiefly in daylight; and if it fails, the failure is at least covered by darkness.

As regards the actual training of the men in these operations, it is desirable to introduce a small scheme, such as was suggested in this chapter when discussing the methods of working at night. Merely to go out and practise an advance at night, and continue the attack at dawn, is not very realistic for a single company; the essence of the operation lies in what occurred the day before, and it would be better to postpone such exercises until battalion or brigade training. A simple scheme, such as the one already referred to, maintains the interest of the men and trains them in all the work they would have to

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do when taking part in similar operations on a larger scale.

It is particularly important that the company should be well trained in a night advance followed by a night attack, which together with good scouting at night complete the requirements for actual company training.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE COMPANY IN DEFENCE

THE NECESSITY FOR DEFENSIVE ACTION, THE DIFFEREN TYPES OF DEFENCE, AND REMARKS ON THE SELECTION OF FIRE POSITIONS AS REGARDS THE SECTION OF THE GROUND, NAMELY, FROM FRONT TO REAR

ALTHOUGH the predominating factor in war is the attack, and the defence must always come second, we could not prosecute a campaign successfully unless our companies were thoroughly trained in the art of defence. Whilst we teach the men that the attack, and the attack alone, can win battles, and consequently the campaign, they must also understand that the defence is a powerful aid to the attack, and that on some occasions attack is only possible either in conjunction with or following close on the heels of defence.

We have seen already that for the attack to be successful, the curtain of mystery which hangs in front of the enemy's army must be torn aside by the initiation of a forward movement, and that the attack which immediately follows must be pressed and maintained at all costs, with the utmost vigour, and without any looking back, until it is brought to a successful conclusion by throwing every man into the fight. Similarly with the defence, there must be no half-hearted occupation of a position, which if things go wrong can be evacuated and another position occupied in rear. For the company in defence there is only one

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course of action—the enemy must be prevented from gaining superiority of fire; if this is impossible, and if it becomes apparent that he may succeed in approaching so close that he can assault the position, he must be attacked. Every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man in the company must understand that when he occupies a defensive position he must prevent the enemy from capturing it by shooting at him as he approaches, and, if he approaches too close, the defenders must issue forth and drive him back with the bayonet. The defensive battle is not complete until this is done; any defence that stops before this, is just like an attack which stops short before the assault is delivered. We need not trouble during company training about the exceptions to this rule until every one thoroughly understands that this is the ordinary system of defence. For this reason it is advisable to avoid all schemes which are apt to produce what is called a running fight, where one side attacks and the other side occupies a defensive position for a short time and then falls back and occupies another. These running fights are the worst possible training for defensive work, because they are apt to teach the men that a defensive position can only be held for a short time, and that when things begin to look unpleasant, and the enemy presses his attack, it is time to retire and occupy another position in rear. A retirement, which would be quite impossible in war, is then commenced and the same thing occurs again a few hundred yards farther back.

It may be said that in war the troops could not and would not retire, and this may be quite true, but the habit of looking upon a defensive position as a locality to be held for a short time will remain in war, the resistance offered is likely to be reduced, and the final counter-stroke, which alone can prevent the enemy from gaining a victory, and may possibly result in a victory for the defence, may

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be omitted. It is possible that we talk a good deal about the offensive-defensive battle without thoroughly realizing its requirements, which, as stated already, demand that the main idea should be the attack and not the defence; that all our dispositions are made for the attack, that the infantry who are going to deliver the attack are placed in the correct position to carry it out, and the artillery scheme of action is based almost entirely on the attack. The defensive part of the battle is merely to assist the attack, to make it more powerful and more effective, because, owing to the position in which the defending troops are placed, the enemy will be hampered in his movements, a great part of his force will be wasted in dealing with our defence, and the localities held by our defending troops will give us more freedom of action, and consequently more power of manœuvre.

There is, however, one great drawback to the offensive-defensive battle, which frequently paralyses its effect: the initiative must be given up to the enemy. He can attack where he pleases, and when he pleases, and his plan of attack may, possibly, be unsuitable for our attack to deal with. It is then necessary to make fresh dispositions, to move troops to fresh localities, prepare a new scheme of artillery action and a new plan of battle, all of which may not suit that portion of our original plan which dealt with the defence. Meanwhile, the defended position is being heavily attacked, and possibly pressed too hard, because it has not been relieved by the attack which was designed originally as the main feature of the operation, but which has been upset by the enemy's plan of action. The defence is then reinforced from the troops detailed for the attack, and the battle is no longer offensive-defensive but defensive-offensive, and it will require great determination on the part of all commanders to twist the words back into their proper places.

We see, therefore, that even in the offensive-defensive

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battle it is essential that the defensive should be maintained at all costs, and that neither from habit nor from any other cause should there be any chance of the idea rising in the mind of the defending portion of the army that it would be possible to evacuate the position first defended, occupy another one in rear, and still hope to win the battle. If this is the case with the offensive-defensive battle it is still more apparent in the purely defensive engagement, where the company, as part of a large force, is required to prevent the enemy from carrying the position. There are, no doubt, occasions when a certain locality is only to be held, or rather can only be held, for a definite time owing to the greatly superior numbers of the enemy, such as during a rear-guard action, or when occupying an outpost position, or when the company forms part of an advanced guard which is being defeated and driven back. Such defensive action, however, is exceptional, and should be dealt with during company training under an entirely different heading to the definite defence of a position.

Finally, whenever we are deciding upon a defensive action, let us make quite sure that an attack is out of the question. It is so easy to stay where we are and defend, it is so difficult to advance and attack. The little devil inside us is always for defence and never for attack. Let us take the example of the outpost companies referred to in Chapter XII: why should that flank outpost company attack at all? Why should it not retire to the hill and cover the retreat of the outpost company on its left, which is being heavily attacked? The reason is because the officer commanding that outpost company and the company itself have been properly trained. They know that the first thing a soldier should think of is to hit out at the enemy and attack; this is what should arise naturally in our minds whenever the enemy appears in front of us. There is time enough to think about

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defence, or a covering position, or retreat, when it is perfectly apparent that any attack is out of the question.

Similarly, on the defence, the first part of the operation is to delay the enemy's advance, break down with effective fire his power of attack, and then, whatever the course of events, the final act is an attack. This fact was far more generally realized a hundred or even fifty years ago than it is now. In the old days, when covering fire was either impossible, or very indifferent, troops on the defensive, who were heavily engaged, were unable to extricate themselves without an attack. In 1870 Pellé who was fighting down in the valley at Weissenberg was ordered by Douay to retire: he was so heavily engaged with the enemy in front that he could not retire, and ordered two battalions to come down from the hill in rear and attack to enable him to extricate himself; and there are hundreds of similar examples. The power of the modern gun and rifle to produce covering fire is so great that, provided the ground is suitable, troops on the defensive, or at least the large majority of them, can retire without great difficulty, and perhaps this fact has weakened the stability of the defence and weakened the offensive idea which should always form part of the defence.

Having discussed the offensive spirit which should underlie all defensive action, we can now consider the different types of defence that a company is called upon to deal with in war. These may be divided into two categories: first, the defence of positions or localities where there is time to improve the fire position by digging trenches; to extend the field of fire by clearing away obstructions to view and fire, and to break up or hamper the enemy's attack by the improvement of natural obstacles and the artificial construction of others. Secondly, there is the type of defence where troops are hurried into

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position, from some unavoidable cause, and are unable to strengthen the position in any of the forms indicated above, and can do no more than use their intrenching tools to improve the fire position they have occupied. It is apparent at once that this will greatly affect the choice of a fire position, which is by far the most important item in the defensive training of a company. If cover can be provided artificially by digging trenches, a much more exposed locality can be selected than if the men have to use natural cover, which does not always provide a good or extensive field of fire, with the result that the men may have to lie out in the open, and be no better off as regards cover from fire than the attack; the result would be that as many men would have to be provided for the defence of such a locality as would be required to attack it, whereas on the defensive we hope to arrange matters so that we must be attacked by greatly superior numbers before there is any chance of our position being carried by the enemy.

As it is impossible to say when there would or would not be time to improve a position, it is better to consider the defence under the various tactical headings, and discuss on each occasion the methods that would be adopted if there is plenty of time available and the variations which would be introduced by a hasty occupation of the ground. The situations which would require the adoption of different methods may be divided into:—

(1) The ordinary defensive position, occupied by many companies assisted by the action of the artillery, and constituting either a purely defensive engagement or the defensive part of an offensive-defensive battle.

(2) The defence of a locality by an outpost company.

(3) An advanced guard or an attack thrown

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suddenly on the defensive by the action of the enemy.

(4) An advanced guard or an attack after completing its operations and capturing the position held by the enemy.

(5) A rear guard or a force withdrawing from some locality on or near a battlefield, such as an outpost company, and followed up by the enemy.

(6) Defence by night.

Before entering into details regarding these various types of defence it is advisable to clear the ground by discussing a few matters which are common to all of them. We will consider first the choice of fire positions as regards the section of the ground, namely, from front to rear, and perhaps the most important points in this connection are the conflicting requirements of cover for the men and a good field of fire to stop the attack. On the one hand, it is useless to place men either in trenches or in the open in such an exposed position, that from the very first they will be severely handicapped in the struggle against the attack for superiority of fire. On the other hand, it is equally undesirable to select a fire position where there is excellent cover for the men, but where the field of fire is so bad that the attack will be able to close with the defence, and arrive at the last stages of the battle, with their moral quite unshaken and with very little loss. It is the business of company and section commanders to balance these conflicting requirements and arrive at a just mean between the two, this being one of the rare occasions in war when it is better to adopt half-measures, namely, avoid too much exposure and get as good a field of fire as possible.

The next point to consider is our old friend the skyline, which it is as well to avoid in the defence, chiefly because infantry, except the third-class shot who cannot be

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relied upon, will usually shoot at the top of a hill, if they cannot see the defenders' trenches, rather than at any other part of it. We have already noticed in Chapter VIII that the exact position of the skyline changes according to the position of the observer in front; as the latter advances the skyline, in all convex slopes, and most slopes actually on the top of a hill are convex, also advances. If we halt our observer at the place which we think the enemy will reach before he is stopped by our fire, and where he will endeavour to gain superiority of fire over us, we can fix the skyline with reference to that locality. It is quite apparent that our trenches or fire position cannot be in rear of this skyline, otherwise the whole of the ground in front of us at decisive ranges would be "dead" and we could not hope to repel the attack. We do not wish to occupy the skyline itself, and therefore we must go forward.

There are occasions, however, where the skyline cannot be avoided; for example, when there are large features of the nature of a plateau, flat on the top, with sudden and steep slopes down to the valleys below; the trenches cannot be dug on the steep slopes, because they would have to be extraordinarily deep and would be very difficult to conceal. For example, to dig a trench two and a half feet wide and four feet deep, with a thickness of parapet of two feet (untouched earth) at the top, it would be necessary on a thirty degree slope to dig down seven feet at the back of the trench. When such a skyline is occupied it is advisable to place big bushes along it, which will, at least, prevent the enemy from seeing when the defenders put up their heads to fire, and, as they will be shooting down a steep slope, the men would have to expose their shoulders over the top of the parapet. Such a fire position is anything but a good one, and it is probable that if there is any grass growing along the top of the slope it

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would be better to have no trench, and place the men in a firing position just at the edge. The enemy's bullets being fired up hill at decisive ranges will mostly miss the men's heads, and cannot reach their bodies, which are protected by the flat edge of the hill. If the hill has a rounded edge trenches must be dug, otherwise the slope immediately in front will not be under fire from any place on the top where the men could lie without being greatly exposed.

The hill with a convex slope is always a great difficulty, especially to troops when training on Salisbury Plain, where nearly all the slopes are of that nature. The selection of a fire trench or position on such a slope depends almost entirely upon the nature of the ground in front. If it is fairly flat from the foot of the slope to a distance of eight or nine hundred yards, with a good field of fire, there is no doubt that from the point of view of concealment, and of the trajectory of the rifle, the foot of the slope, or better still a few yards beyond it, would be the best place for the fire position. If, however, there is a good deal of dead ground in front, and it is necessary to give the defenders some command so as to be able to fire into that ground, the trenches must be constructed on the side of the hill. The height up the slope that it is necessary to site the trenches depends upon the amount of command required to look into the dead ground, but it must be remembered that after going a few yards up the slope, and lying down in the position where it is proposed to dig the fire trench, it will be found that there is now dead ground at the actual foot of the slope. This dead ground is undesirable, because it gives the attack a safe locality in which to assemble for the delivery of the assault. On the other hand, it is very easy for the defenders to rush down the slope and charge the enemy with the bayonet, and get

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back into the trench before it is safe for the attack to open fire on the counter-stroke. A fire position, nevertheless, where the enemy can collect for the assault only a few yards from the defenders' trenches can hardly be considered a good one, unless the ground in front is very exposed to the fire of the defence, and consequently it is extremely unlikely that the attack will be able to gain sufficient superiority of fire to get close enough to the position to assault it. If the attack have artillery positions which command the foot of the hill, and actually look into the trenches, it will be necessary to go higher up the slope to neutralize the artillery command; this, of course, will increase the dead ground immediately in front of the trench, and will lessen the effect of the defenders' fire from the trench, because the bullets will no longer sweep the level ground beyond the foot of the slope but strike it at an angle.

The only advantage from the point of view of infantry fire of siteing the trench higher up the slope is that the reinforcements can be sent into the trench with less risk of loss, because they have a shorter distance to go exposed to infantry fire, although it may make very little difference as regards artillery fire, because the enemy's artillery are farther away than their infantry, and can see the greater part of the whole slope of the hill. It is always worth while to ascertain the distance that reinforcements must advance under effective infantry fire to gain the fire trench. This can be done by ascertaining the position of the skyline from a point about six hundred yards in front of the trench. The attack occupying a fire position right and left of that point would not be able to see beyond this skyline, and although to the defenders standing on the top of the hill it might appear to be very difficult to reinforce the fire trench from the rear it will be found that the reinforcements can cross the most

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dangerous part, the top and crest of the hill, where in ordinary cases hostile fire would be very sweeping, completely under cover from infantry fire, but not, of course, from the artillery fire of the attack. It is not necessary to lay too much stress upon obtaining a covered way into the trenches for the use of the reinforcements, although it is very desirable, because it strengthens the defence. It is, however, no more difficult for the defenders' reinforcements to reach the fire trench, even when exposed to the enemy's fire, than for reinforcements to reach the firing line of the attack, and there is no more reason why the reinforcements on the defenders' side should be made a special target than those on the attacking side.

Great facilities for reinforcing the fire trench tend towards undue reinforcement, and provide a comfortable line of retreat when things become serious. Such facilities are very desirable in the case of a rear guard, or for any delaying action, but are not an absolute necessity for the stubborn defence of a position. There is no doubt, however, that it is a great advantage to be able to move the casualties out of the fire trench, because their presence can hardly have a good effect upon the defenders, and they also take up room which is required for fighting.

The case of a hill with a convex slope, with a valley in front and another hill rising just beyond it, is even more difficult to deal with than the last type. A solution which would probably paralyse any attack would be to place a fire trench well back on the top of the hill, with a field of fire on to the top and forward crest of the opposite hill, but with the whole of the valley and the greater part of the slopes of both hills out of view of the trench. Another trench would then thus be constructed right down at the foot of the slope of the defenders' hill, firing up the opposite slope and just over the crest. This, of course, would absorb a large number of men, and the defenders in

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the lower trench could not, probably, be reinforced or provided with water or ammunition until dark. If an obstacle is placed just below the crest of the opposite hill, exposed to fire from both fire trenches, the position should be extremely difficult to carry by assault. The attack could not establish a fire position to look down into the lower trench because they would, themselves, be looked into by the defenders in the higher trench. Such a position would be very difficult for the attacking artillery to deal with, because it would be very hard to locate and range on the upper trench, since all the shells which burst short would fall into the valley and would not be seen, and those which burst over might be hidden by another depression in rear. It would be practically impossible to produce really effective artillery fire against the lower trench.

The position of a trench on the side of a hill, whether the slope is convex or concave, depends to a great extent upon the dead ground in front. The object we aim at is quite simple: we want to be able to fire over the whole of the ground in front, and we want our trajectory, as far as possible, to be parallel to the surface of that ground, because errors due to mistakes when sighting the rifle are then diminished. At the same time, we do not wish to expose our fire trench more than is absolutely necessary. These requirements are all of a conflicting nature, and it would be quite exceptional to find a position where they were all fulfilled. Even the famous glacis slope at St. Privat on the French right flank at Gravelotte only fulfilled the conditions on a front of about a hundred yards. When these requirements cannot be met we are compelled to compromise; either we must expose our trenches, we must lessen the effect of our fire, or we must leave large patches of dead ground for the attack to make use of. When we are considering how much of each of these requirements

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we are going to abandon, we must decide, first of all, what part of the ground in front it is most important to keep under effective fire. There is no doubt that the locality where we want to produce the greatest effect is the line where we are likely by our fire to stop the attack and where the struggle for fire superiority will take place. It is not, as a rule, difficult to locate this line, and, if we can do so, we ought to site our trench, if possible, so that we can sweep this position with our fire, and can cover the ground between it and our trenches, or as much of it as possible, with effective fire.

Another matter worth consideration when siteing the fire trench is the possibility of the attackers being able to produce effective covering fire, which usually means two tiers of fire, against it. For example, a trench sited high up a hill might be subject to covering fire from the attack much more than one sited low down on the hill. In localities which are exceptionally exposed to covering fire from the attack it may be desirable to establish two tiers of fire for the defence, in which case the advanced trench or fire position should be defiladed from that in rear. During the struggle for superiority of fire it is not always easy to get the men to put up their heads to fire, and if they have any feeling that they may be shot by their own comrades as well as by the enemy in front they will not be given the best conditions available for maintaining the defence. It is also advisable to arrange for the distribution of fire from the two tiers, otherwise the fire from both may be directed at the same part of the attack, and other parts may be able to advance without difficulty. If, by any chance, the enemy succeed in carrying the front trench by assault an immediate local counter-stroke must be delivered to recapture it. This is not a difficult operation, because the men have only to rush downhill and gain the trench, when they at

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once obtain cover and find themelves in an excellent fire position.

A very important consideration at all times is whether the fire trench will be an easy or difficult mark for the enemy's artillery. We have seen already in Chapter VII that anything in the nature of a fairly level line, when it can be seen by the attacking artillery, is easy for them to deal with, whereas a position which may appear to be very exposed to the defenders, on perfectly open ground with a depression in front and another in rear, which the enemy's artillery cannot see into, is a bad target for them. A clump of trees, the edge of a wood, farm buildings and enclosures, trenches near haystacks or along hedges are all good targets for the attacking guns. It must be remembered that the defenders' fire trenches form a stationary target for the artillery of the attack, and for that reason it is very important for infantry officers to study the artillery problem of the attack when fixing the position of each trench. One of the reasons why clearings in woods or positions behind woods are strong for defence is because the attacking artillery are unable to fire on the defending infantry. A very strong defence would be arranged if the fire trenches were sited so that they could only see the ground in front for some nine hundred yards, all ground beyond that towards the enemy being hidden from view by a general depression in the ground or by woods. The attacking artillery would not be able to support their infantry with great effect in such a case, because they would have to come forward under very close infantry and artillery fire from the defence if they were occupying positions in the open, and they might have great difficulty in finding covered positions where the observing posts would be reasonably close to the batteries and the shells could clear the obstructions in front of them and yet be sufficiently low to hit the target. This is the chief reason

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why we see so little effective co-operation of artillery during our manœuvres where the ground is so close and the view so restricted that neither the attackers nor the defenders can see much beyond nine hundred yards and frequently not so far, except bare patches which can easily be avoided.

Another important matter as regards artillery and infantry co-operation in the defence is to decide which part of the ground in front can be left entirely to the artillery, which part entirely to the infantry, which part requires both artillery and infantry defence, and which is dead to both arms.

A company is hardly large enough actually to train with artillery, or even to occupy a wide enough front to decide upon this allotment of ground to each arm. It is important, however, that the matter should be considered during company training, because it affects the siteing of the trenches, and also affects the infantry fire problem. For example, if for some reason there is a patch of open ground 1400 yards in front of the fire trenches which the attack must cross, and which the artillery cannot deal with without sacrificing some more important requirement, it will be necessary for the infantry to bring fire to bear on that patch, and it might affect the siteing of the trench. Even during company training every company and section commander should plan out on the ground in front the areas that will be exposed to the infantry and artillery fire of the defence, or to both or neither.

One of the most difficult problems for the company in defence is to deal with very broken ground, small hills and undulations, with patches of bush or scrub, and no marked feature to provide a general line of defence; the whole truth being that this is ideal ground to attack over, and that therefore the best defence for such ground

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is offence, assisted where possible by fire from the defended portion. It is a very interesting problem for a company commander, for the section commanders, and for the men themselves, to study the defence of a portion of ground of this nature, assuming, of course, that there are imaginary companies to the right and left. It is really a sort of game of hide and seek. Every bit of the ground in front should be examined with a view to discovering what the attack would do, and the best way to do this is to attack with the company, and then see how the enemy can be attacked when he is carrying out the same operation. There will be certain fire positions which the attack will make for, there will be a great deal of dead ground where the attack can rest and reform, and there will be a good deal of covering fire. At the same time, owing to the small size of the features of ground, there may be a good deal of confusion and crowding in the attack, which will render a counter-stroke more effective. Decisions must be arrived at as to what localities should be held by a few men to provide covering fire, and what places should be chosen for the attacking sections to assemble in and deploy from. The companies on the right and left can only be relied upon as a rule to deal with the enemy that is advancing against their own front. This, however, will be of great assistance to our company, because it will narrow the front on which it will be called upon to operate. Fortunately for the defence, such ground does not usually extend over a very wide area, and is generally found where part of a line of defence runs over foot hills, or across ravines, or through gravel pits and quarries.

The occupation of fire positions in farm enclosures or buildings of any kind is only advisable when they cannot be avoided, or when they are not exposed to the artillery fire of the attack. The reason why buildings are bad fire

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positions is that they are an excellent target for artillery. A shrapnel shell will go through most walls, and it then bursts inside, or, rather, it bursts in the wall, and the bullets come tearing out of the hole. Howitzer fire is even more destructive against such a target, especially with high explosive shell. Another objection is that the men are in a very confined space; they are usually crowded together, and thus present a very vulnerable target. When it is absolutely necessary to defend buildings and farm enclosures which are exposed to hostile artillery fire it is best to keep the garrison in rear of the buildings as long as possible, and only occupy the fire positions when a target appears. Supports and reserves should never be brought inside until they are actually required. Walls or other enclosures round villages are not quite so bad as the above because they are more extended. Their chief disadvantage is that the supports get into the streets and houses in rear, where they are liable to suffer heavy loss from hostile artillery fire.

If the buildings or villages are not exposed to artillery fire they form strong points in the line of defence, and can, usually, furnish a prolonged resistance. Their chief disadvantage is that in practice they absorb a great number of men. The real truth is that every man who goes into a village does not reach the fire position at the far edge, and the most stringent discipline is necessary on the part of company, section and group leaders to keep their formations intact. If companies or even sections get mixed up, the little devil inside some of the men tells them to go and find their own section, and he generally leads them into a house or some other place which, though doubtless a safe retreat, is not a good locality to occupy in defending the village. Another disadvantage regarding the defence of villages or buildings is that it is very rarely possible to practise it in

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peace time, and troops thrown into such a locality have had no practical experience of how to set about their work. Most training grounds have a dilapidated looking building which the engineers have placed in a state of defence, and which is visited by the companies at training, but they do not learn very much from the explanations which are given to the men as to the method of making loopholes, &c. In any case the building is bound to be quite unlike what they will encounter in war, it has no furniture inside it of a highly inflammable nature and occupying a great deal of space in the rooms, and the means of improvising defences from material available in the house are usually non-existent. In fact, it is doubtful if any satisfactory means of training companies in the defence of houses could be arranged in peace time.

The edge of a wood is not a good fire position when it is exposed to the artillery fire of the attack, because it is so easy for the gunners to produce effective fire against it, and it also affords a clearly marked line for the attacking infantry to aim at. From actual experience in war, such a position does not appear to be bad when it is not exposed to artillery fire, especially when artillery support is available to assist the defenders. Its chief disadvantage in this case is that the edge of the wood very rarely runs in the right direction to suit the defence of the remainder of the position, and consequently creates salients in the general line. Its chief advantage is that supports can be brought up to the fire trench under cover, and casualties can be removed to the rear. It is best to site the trench as far back inside the wood as possible, so as to escape the heavy fire which will be directed against the edge. In such a position the trenches would be difficult to locate, and if there is no undergrowth the field of fire will not be seriously

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interfered with by a few tree trunks. The object would be to retire the trench until the defenders can just see under the branches at the edge to fire over the whole of the ground in front. If, however, there is any risk of the field of fire being interfered with the defenders must be placed at the edge of the wood.

A wood which partially covers a very bare slope, the foot of which it is desired to occupy, provides an excellent means of communication with the advanced trenches, because reinforcements can be sent forward through the wood and then passed to both flanks along the fire trench.

A clearing in a wood, especially if it is two or three hundred yards wide and the opposite edge is under fire from the defenders' edge, appears to be a very strong position for defence, especially when the defenders' edge is not exposed to the artillery fire of the attack. This is not due so much to the field of fire and the non-exposure of the defenders as to the difficulty which the attack must experience in making an organized advance from the wood (*see* page 149). Such a fire trench is more suited to passive than to active defence, because it is nearly as difficult for the defence to issue from their edge of the wood to deliver a counter-stroke as it is for the attack to move forward from their side. The defenders have a slight advantage in this respect, because they can prepare paths beforehand for communication purposes, and their companies which are detailed for the counter-stroke will not have been subject to the confusion and loss which have been experienced by the attack before reaching the wood and whilst passing through it.

When a fire position, either entrenched or not, must be occupied inside a wood where there is no clearing, and no time to make one, it is best to occupy the most commanding ground available. There does not appear

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to be any theoretical reason for this, but in all wood fighting in actual war the severest struggle has taken place on the highest ground inside the wood, and success or failure has depended upon the defence or loss of this ground. Perhaps the reason is to be found in the fact that during all wood fighting the power of the bayonet becomes as great, if not greater, than that of the bullet, and it is easier to use the bayonet when rushing down hill than when charging up hill. This is one reason why infantry in a wood, or in very close country, or at night, have such a great advantage over cavalry acting dismounted. Of course the moral effect of the bayonet is not realized in peace time, but it becomes very apparent in war, and troops subject to a suddeu bayonet attack will require all their fortitude, and their peace training, to enable them to prosecute their operations with success.

Fire trenches in wet ground should be avoided when possible; they get full of water and if they cannot be drained the men suffer great discomfort, and consequent loss of energy and moral, especially in cold weather. Such fire positions will be encountered more frequently when the company is engaged in outpost work than when forming part of the defence of an extensive position.

Perhaps the best locality for a fire trench, so far as concealment and power of reinforcing the trenches are concerned, is ground which is dotted with low scrub which presents no clearly defined edge to the enemy's view and fire, and which does not extend to the ground over which he must attack. It is very easy to site trenches in such a locality, so as to combine concealment with a good field of fire. It should be remembered that the chief value of the scrub is its undefined edge. It is a mistake, therefore, to cut down the scrub in front and pile it into a straight line immediately in front of the fire trench; such action will destroy at once the valu• of

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the position, and render a counter-stroke from the trenches very difficult.

A fire trench immediately in front of an obstacle which cannot be crossed or which it is very difficult to cross is undesirable, because it creates an adverse effect upon the moral of the defenders. Human nature demands a secure line of retreat, and the use of that line when things get bad; military training aims at overcoming this demand, and reducing the desire to use any line of retreat. No doubt military training will overcome, in many cases, its enemy human nature, but it is undesirable to accentuate the struggle which will be going on between the two in the mind of every individual soldier as long as the battle lasts. It may be argued that the defenders cannot retire and that, therefore, they must fight; the second, unfortunately, does not necessarily follow the first. There is a feeling amongst the defenders that they have not been given the best chance, that they have been caught like rats in a trap, and consequently the desire to put up a good fight and to defeat the enemy at all costs is apt to be weakened. We certainly do not wish to accentuate our lines of retreat or to say anything about them when we are defending a position, but the very fact that they are there will be apparent to the men and will strengthen their powers of resistance, especially during the earlier stages of the battle.

There is one point connected with human nature which it is always desirable to consider when siteing a fire trench. The infantry soldier appears to be more desirous of occupying a position on high ground than on low ground. If a party of recruits had been instructed in the requirements of a fire position, *i.e.*, cover from fire and view, a good field of fire to the front, and facilities for reinforcement, and were then taken to a hill with an excellent field of fire from the foot of it, the ground being practically parallel to

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the trajectory of the bullet, with good concealment for the trenches and means of passing down reinforcements, human nature would take them all to the top of the hill. The field of fire might be more extensive, dead ground might be looked into, and concealment and reinforcement might be quite as easy, but none of these would compensate for the great advantage of sweeping fire as compared with plunging fire.

This brings us to a very important consideration as to whether we should, as a rule, choose high ground rather than low ground for our fire trenches. We have studied various types of fire positions as regards the sectional aspect of the ground and we are now in a position to summarize the relative advantages of the low position as compared with the high one. We must remember, however, that we cannot fix upon any position until we actually visit the ground, and the most that we can glean from a comparison of this nature is whether our inclination should be to go to the top of the hill rather than the foot. There is little doubt that our natural desire is to select the higher ground, where we all feel that we have command of the situation, where we can see what is going on in front of us, and what is perhaps of equal importance we can see a good deal of what is going on to our right and left. In actual war there is an ever-present dread on the part of the soldier acting on the defensive, not that his own company is going to be driven back, but that some other part of the position will be successfully assaulted by the enemy, and that the flank and rear of his own company may be endangered. This feeling will not exist to the same extent on high ground as it would on low ground with commanding ground close in rear. If the fire trenches are on or near the top of the hill and the attack succeed in gaining a footing on the flank of the company the situation will be

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dangerous, but it will not be so bad as when the attack gains the top of the hill on the flank and rear of our company which is on the low ground in front.

Human nature, therefore, appears to vote solid for the top of the hill, but as we have seen already there is a technical but very powerful argument in favour of the lower ground—namely, the undoubted superiority of the fire from the trenches, especially when the ground in front is fairly flat and the view over the greater part of it is uninterrupted. Another technical advantage is that it is easier, as a rule, to conceal the trenches on low ground, especially from the artillery fire of the attack, whilst our own artillery can find good positions on the hill behind without interfering with the infantry defence. The technical disadvantages are that it is difficult sometimes to reinforce a forward line, especially down an exposed slope, and it is also difficult to remove casualties from the fire trench. On the low position there is bound to be an increase of dead ground in front, but the trajectory of the bullet will conform to the surface of such ground as can be seen. On the high position there is undoubtedly a decrease in the amount of dead ground, but the fire effect, owing to its plunging nature, is not so good as on the low ground. It is open to question in every case, and depends a good deal upon the general nature of the ground in front, whether the fire effect we lose by increased dead ground in the low position is greater than the fire effect we gain by the trajectory of our bullet being approximately parallel to the surface.

In close country the feeling of insecurity as regards the safety of the position right and left of our company is apt to be increased, and it is probable that, as in wood fighting, the top of the hill is the best. The higher position may be exposed to the enemy's artillery in the valley below, but both the artillery and the infantry of

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the defence will, at least, be able to fire at the attack whilst crossing two or three fields instead of only across one, which is about all that can be seen on low ground.

The most we can decide upon, without studying one definite piece of ground, is that our natural inclination is to choose the high ground, but that this choice will almost invariably reduce the fire effect of our defence, and that if there is a covered approach to our fire trenches and very little dead ground in front, with an extensive field of fire, there is no doubt that the lower ground is the best. If, on the other hand, these conditions are not existent to any considerable extent, the moral advantage of the higher ground should not be lost sight of, especially in close country.

Before leaving the study of fire positions from the point of view of the section of the ground, namely, from front to rear, and considering the selection of fire positions as regards the plan of the ground, namely, from flank to flank, there is one type of fire position which is worth consideration, although it may not often occur in war. In any country where there are plateaux or flat-topped hills, and the enemy's artillery fire is, for some reason of ground or other cause, superior to our own, a powerful defence can be organized by siteing the trenches several hundred yards, or as far as the ground will permit, in rear of the crest of the plateau or hill. In such a case the crest should be occupied by strong outposts well supported by artillery, which would compel the enemy to deploy, so that we may judge his strength and discover the direction of his attack, but the real defence would not commence until the enemy came over the crest of the hill. Such a position is, of course, eminently suited to a delaying or rear-guard action, because it is so easy to retire from. We can now sum up all our requirements:

(1) We go forward to get a good field of fire

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(2) We go back to avoid unduly exposing our men, except as in (4) below.

(3) We choose high ground because we can see what is going on in front of us and to our flanks, because we can look into ground which is invisible from a lower position, and because it is easy to reinforce our fire trenches, and there is little chance of their being commanded either by the artillery or infantry of the attack.

(4) We choose low ground because our fire effect is usually so much greater than on high ground, and because, when the country is very open, there is more prospect of concealing our trenches and escaping the artillery fire of the attack.

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CHAPTER XV

THE COMPANY IN DEFENCE

THE STUDY OF FIRE POSITIONS AS REGARDS THE PLAN OF THE GROUND, NAMELY, FROM FLANK TO FLANK.

HAVING considered the siteing of trenches as regards the section of the ground, we can now study them in plan, with the object of discovering what modifications it will be necessary to introduce as regards our former conclusions. There is no doubt that the simplest and most efficient form of defence is for the fire trench to be constructed in one straight line, and although this is possible on many occasions as regards one company, it is never possible for a large force, because, owing to the features of the ground, a straight line could never be drawn across the country and everywhere provide the best field of fire obtainable. In some parts of the straight line the fire trenches might suit our requirements admirably, but in other parts it would be impossible to defend them. Our company, therefore, must be trained to understand that the siteing of trenches does not depend entirely upon the best field of fire, and the most covered position for the defenders, in one part of a position, but also upon its suitability as regards the defence of the whole position.

The most common disturbing elements are salients and re-entrants caused by spurs, woods, villages, farmsteads, and isolated buildings. Of these, it is probable that a salient caused by a spur is the most difficult to deal with,

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and must always be a weak spot in a defensive position. The position to be occupied may contain one prominent spur like the well-known Rotherberg at Spicheren, or several spurs like the French position at Worth; thus we may have one marked salient in our position or two or more salients with re-entrants between. We will consider first the single spur jutting out in or near the centre of a defensive position with ground of about equal or greater height running to the right and left from the root of the spur.

With modern weapons on open ground, a small salient of the nature of a single spur which does not extend more than about a hundred yards to the front and does not greatly interfere with the field of fire can be neglected, and the fire trench for the defence of the spur sited in line with the companies defending the remainder of the position, whether they are at the top or the foot of the slope. There may be a certain amount of dead ground below the point of the spur where the enemy can assemble before assaulting, but the front will be very narrow and the companies from the fire trenches in rear can bring a very heavy fire to bear along the top of the spur and along both sides of it. A large spur extending a considerable distance to the front is much more difficult to deal with, chiefly because the slope at the end of the spur is almost always convex. If the fire trench is placed right forward at the end of the spur it must be sited very near the foot of the slope if there is to be no dead ground in front; and in such a position it might be commanded by rising ground in front which would be occupied by the attack. In this case, however, the ground might be treated in the same manner as suggested on page 271, and a second fire trench established on the top of the spur so as to command any part of the attack which advanced far enough to command the defenders' fire trench at the foot of the spur.

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What we require to teach the company is that such exposed positions must be occupied occasionally in war, and must be held at all costs, so that it is necessary for them to understand why the position is selected, and why no better method can be adopted.

The plan finally decided upon for the defence of the spur will depend, naturally, upon whether the companies to the right and left of the spur are occupying fire trenches at the top of the main ridge or at the foot, as well as upon the nature of the spur itself and the ground to the front. Assuming first that the main line of defence runs along the foot of the hills the retention of the spur becomes of vital importance to the defenders, because if it is captured by the attack the fire trenches right and left of the spur will be commanded and probably enfiladed from the spur. In such a case it would be necessary to arrange for the defence of the point of the spur and for a second line of trenches to provide a second tier of fire farther back. The defenders of this second line would not be able to see into the ground immediately beyond the point of the spur, but their trenches should be sited so that rifle fire can be brought to bear on the attack when it is brought to a standstill in order to obtain superiority of fire.

There appears to be no reason why trenches should not be constructed down both sides of the spur parallel to the general line of defence, so as to fire along the sides of the spur. This would greatly narrow the front of the attack if the latter succeeded in assaulting the trenches at the point of the spur and gained a fire position just above the dead ground. It may be anticipated that the attack would endeavour to gain a footing on the end of the spur before pressing their advance against the remainder of the position; this might give the defenders right and left of the spur an opportunity of concentrating fire against the enemy who were directly attacking the spur.

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In former days, when the effective fire of the rifle was limited to a few hundred yards, the attack on a salient was usually of an enveloping nature, the attackers forming a semicircle round the point of the spur and producing a concentrated fire upon the defenders. With the modern long-range rifle this would lay the attack open to enfilade fire from the companies right and left of the spur; and sometimes, when the view is unrestricted, the dead ground immediately in front of the spur can also be brought under the fire of the defenders. The main conclusion appears to be that when the general line of defence is at the foot of the hills the spur must be held at all costs, and that it will be necessary to place one or more companies in a very exposed position on the point of the spur, with a second tier of fire farther back, and with trenches down each side of the spur parallel to the general line of defence, a local reserve being kept in rear ready to deliver an immediate counter-stroke in the event of the enemy being successful in gaining a footing on any part of the spur.

When the general line of trenches runs along or near the crest of the hills, it is not of vital importance to the defence to prevent the enemy from gaining a footing on the point of the spur, although it is highly desirable to do this, because the possession of such a locality enables other parts of the attacking line to press forward. It can easily be understood that companies attacking right or left of the spur cannot advance far until the point of the spur is captured, because otherwise their flanks will be exposed to a counter-stroke from the spur, and possibly to enfilade fire. If, however, the attack can establish a fire position on the point of the spur, the defence will have difficulty in arranging enfilade fire against other parts of the attack without themselves being enfiladed from the point of the spur, and any idea of a counter-

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stroke would be out of the question unless it was directed against the point of the spur.

The great difficulty to be overcome by the defence in occupying the point of a spur is the artillery fire of the attack. The enemy can dispose their guns and concentrate a heavy fire on such a small locality with ease; as a result, the defenders in this locality, if not carefully entrenched, may be able to do little more than delay the attack, because there will be no hope of gaining superiority of fire, and sooner or later the point of the spur will be carried by assault. It appears, therefore, that when our company is called upon to defend such a locality, extra efforts must be made to prevent the enemy from gaining superiority of fire, and that this part of the position must be more carefully and elaborately entrenched than any other, even to the extent of employing bomb-proof cover for the defenders. It might be suggested that the trenches at the point of the spur need not be occupied until the attack reaches the stage when it is trying to obtain superiority of fire over the defence. It is doubtful, however, whether any advantage would be gained by this. The defenders might escape a certain amount of artillery fire which could be directed against the spur during the first part of the battle, but, on the other hand, they would probably suffer heavy loss when advancing at a later stage to occupy the trenches; and the most severe bombardment will take place when the infantry of the attack are trying to gain superiority of fire, and when the trenches must be occupied in any case.

To sum up the above, it is suggested that in the case of a bare spur of considerable size, jutting out and forming a salient in front of any part of a position except the flanks, it is essential to defend the point of the spur when the main line of defence runs along the foot of the hills from which the spur springs. In this case a trench can

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be constructed at the foot of the slope at the extreme end of the spur, with another fire trench higher up in rear, to provide two tiers of fire and to command any fire position which the enemy might occupy and whence they could command the lower trench; or that the point of the spur, with as little dead ground as possible in front, should be selected for the fire trench, which latter should when possible be provided with bomb-proof cover for the defenders. In the case of a similar spur where the main line of defence runs near the top of the hills in rear, the defence of the point of the spur is not vital, although it will greatly delay the attack against other parts of the position right and left of the spur.

When a spur is covered with scrub or wood which extends from the main line of defence to the foot of the front slope of the spur, the "human nature" solution would be to occupy the edge of the wood or scrub at the point of the spur, and this no doubt has some advantages. It would be easy to pass reinforcements down the spur, and with proper discipline and direction these reinforcements should arrive in a complete and organized condition at the place they were intended to go to. Nevertheless the defenders would be exposed to a very heavy artillery and infantry attack, and the defence of this part of the position would absorb a great number of men, because not only would trenches be constructed facing the direction of the attack, but also all round the spur to prevent the attack from gaining a footing in the scrub in rear of the advanced trenches.

It is probable that a stronger defence, involving the employment of fewer men, could be arranged by clearing a belt right across the spur, a little in advance of the main line of defence, and entangling the far side. The actual site selected for the clearing would be decided by the slope of the ground, the object being to obtain a

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sweeping fire over every bit of ground right up to the enemy's side of the clearing. If this edge is cleared so that it will have the appearance in plan of several W's placed alongside each other like the teeth of a saw, it will be very difficult for the enemy to attack out of it.

There is a great deal to be said in favour of this plan: the defenders are less exposed, fewer men are required, and although the attack is able to approach very close to the position without suffering great loss, a certain amount of disorganization will occur during the advance through the wood or scrub. If, in addition, the edge of the clearing on the attackers' side is entangled and cut in the shape suggested, it will be very difficult for the enemy to get any farther. When there is plenty of time available it might be desirable to hold the far edge of the wood or scrub at the point of the spur as an advanced post, with the main defences behind the clearing in rear, but in this case, if the defenders in front are driven back, they must retire along the side slopes of the spur, so as to avoid the centre of the clearing altogether (*see also* page 313 on advanced posts in the defence).

A spur jutting out from the flank of the main position is, perhaps, even more difficult to deal with than when it runs out from some other part of the line of defence, because infantry and more particularly artillery fire cannot under any circumstances be directed on to the dead ground from the main position on both sides of the spur. In fact the artillery defence of a spur on the flank is very ineffective, because the guns must be somewhere on or behind the high ground; the top of the spur is almost invariably level for some distance or has a gentle incline down hill; the slope at the point of the spur is almost always convex; and in any case there would be a considerable stretch of dead ground beyond, especially on the outer flank. Furthermore, if the infantry fire trenches

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are placed anywhere on the spur, the artillery, except perhaps howitzers, could not see well enough to fire over them with sufficient accuracy to damage the attack seriously.

If our company is placed with others to defend the point of the spur, the position will be very isolated; it will be subject to a converging infantry and artillery attack, because the outer flank of the attack could envelop the outer flank of the defence, and it is difficult to see how the defenders can prevent the attack from gaining superiority of fire. It appears, therefore, that in such a case the best position for the company would be farther back, more or less in line with the trenches on the main position. Such a locality would not be unduly exposed to hostile artillery or infantry fire, and with careful arrangements as regards siteing the trenches so as to get the extreme field of fire that is possible, and placing obstacles under effective fire from the trenches, a strong defence should be possible. The great drawback, as before mentioned, is that the slope at the point of the spur is almost always convex; this means that the field of fire must be very limited, and, since it is absolutely necessary that the actual ground on which the obstacle is placed should be swept with bullets, it must be situated very close to the trenches (*vide* Chapter XVI on the construction and siteing of obstacles).

It is difficult to conceive a worse locality than a spur on which to rest the flank of the position, and no doubt it would be avoided when possible. If the spur is covered with wood or scrub, it could be treated in exactly the same manner as was suggested for the first type of spur, except that it would be undesirable to defend the point of the spur.

As already pointed out on page 140, a spur which runs out from the main position diagonally towards the enemy, is a source of strength rather than weakness to

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the defence, provided it is not on the flank of the position. If the attack gain the point of the spur and endeavour to advance with their front directed along the top of the spur, that portion of the attack which is nearest to the main position will be enfiladed by the defenders, and if the attack endeavours to maintain its true direction, namely, perpendicular to the front of the position, the companies are certain to crowd into the dead ground, gaps will be created, and the cohesion of the attack seriously disturbed.

The company may be called upon to defend part of a position where there are several spurs jutting out from the main position towards the enemy. In this case the main line of defence can be prepared right in front of the spurs, along the top of the spurs at the points, or at the head of the re-entrants. There are disadvantages in all these positions, and great differences of opinion exist as to which is the best. It is evident, therefore, that the company may be called upon to adopt any one of these three systems, so we must consider the reasons why all of them are bad, ascertain such good points as each possesses, and thus make the best of the situation when preparing the position for our company.

Assuming the most difficult situation when the ground is perfectly open and exposed to the enemy's view and fire, the advantages of the first method are that the fire trenches, being on the low ground, should get a good field of fire, suitable to the trajectory of the rifle, provided that there is not much dead ground in front, and that the trenches are not commanded by higher ground which the enemy can occupy. It will be easier to conceal the trenches on the lower ground than if placed on the points of the spurs, and consequently more difficult for the attack to discover their exact position. The disadvantages are that it will be very difficult to reinforce

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the trenches when the struggle for superiority of fire is in progress, because it would necessitate a long advance over the spurs or down the re-entrants, exposed to hostile infantry and artillery fire. Trenches would have to be constructed to hold the supports, otherwise there would be no troops available to replace casualties, and this would necessitate either more labour or more time before the position was ready for occupation. It would be very difficult to deliver local counter-strokes with effect, that is with fresh troops, because they would have such a long way to advance under fire before they could come to grips with the enemy, and would give the latter plenty of time to prepare to meet it. A company placed in such a position must be prepared to face these difficulties and make the most of the advantages, by far the most important of all being the flat field of fire in front. If there is a great deal of dead ground in front of our particular company and it is absolutely necessary to retire the trench on to higher ground in rear, in order to ensure an effective defence, we should not go higher than can be helped, because every foot we raise the trench over the general level of the ground in front means a slight loss in fire effect and increased exposure to the enemy's fire. Perhaps the greatest advantage of this forward position is that our artillery have full scope to go where they please and occupy the best possible positions, either entrenched or under cover, on the high ground in rear. They are not in any way hampered by the infantry defence, which frequently occurs when the infantry trenches are on high ground, because guns cannot fire safely over the heads of infantry that are posted close in front of them, and it is necessary for that part of the position to be given up to artillery alone, or else for the latter to find other and perhaps not such good positions elsewhere. With reliable and well-trained troops.

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and in spite of its disadvantages, this forward position is probably the best general line of defence of the three.

There appears to be little to recommend the occupation of the points of the spurs as the main line of defence on perfectly open ground. The field of fire to the front may be extensive, and there may be little dead ground, but the trajectory of the bullet will not be parallel to the ground. The position may look formidable to the enemy, but that would be the case whatever line was selected. The fire trenches will be very exposed, the whole of the enemy's infantry and artillery fire will be directed against the points of the spurs, because he must get a footing on these before he can advance anywhere else, and if he succeeds in this it will be unnecessary to attack the trenches in the re-entrants below, and if there are no trenches there his infantry attack against the spurs will be all the easier. The reinforcement of the fire trenches and the delivery of local counter-strokes will be almost as difficult in this case as it was in the last, and the same arrangements must be made to provide cover for the supports to replace casualties in the fire trenches.

The third system, namely, holding the head of the re-entrants as the general line of defence, has more marked advantages from the point of view of concealment, and, consequently, comparative immunity from the fire of the attack. It is easy to reinforce the fire trenches and easy to deliver a counter-stroke; very effective fire can be arranged from the left-hand side of one re-entrant over the top and point of the spur on the right and vice versa. Owing to the usual convex slope on the top of the spur, fire directed straight down the spur will be very sweeping for short ranges, but the actual extent of the field of fire will be limited. The fire down the re-entrants and along the sides of the spurs should be fairly sweeping, and considering all points it

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appears that this method of holding the ground is superior to the last-mentioned system.

There are, as usual, certain drawbacks, the most serious being the large amount of dead ground in front of the position, which will enable the attack to get within effective rifle range without suffering heavy loss. The enemy can gain possession of the points of the spurs and work forward along the top of each spur within close range of the defence, and probably establish themselves in good fire positions. It will be difficult, however, for the attacking artillery to find positions whence they can support their infantry, unless the ground in front of the defenders rises to an equal or greater height, in which case, with perfectly open slopes, such as we are discussing at present, the defenders' position can hardly be described as good.

The co-operation of the artillery and infantry on the defenders' side will also be difficult. It may be necessary to hold an almost continuous line of trenches, or at least to have them prepared for defence and ready for occupation if required. This will leave no gaps through which the artillery, except howitzers, can fire with safety to the infantry. The guns, therefore, must be retired a considerable distance in rear of the infantry line, which may mean that they must be below the rear crest of the line of hills which forms the position. If this is the case the dead ground in front of the guns (except the howitzers) will be increased, because the shells must clear the top of the hill in front of the battery, and the trajectory being very flat the shell will not reach a position in the air close enough to the ground to damage the enemy, when exploded, until it has traversed a very long distance.

Our company, taking part in the defence of this position, would be allotted a certain definite area of ground to cover with fire. If placed directly behind a re-entrant,

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this area would naturally extend down the valley between the two spurs; the slope of this valley is almost always slightly concave, so that there should be very little dead ground in front of the company and no difficulty in siteing the trenches. It may be anticipated that the attack will endeavour to gain ground along the top and sides of the spurs before pressing forward up the valley, so the company should be prepared to bring fire to bear on the spurs to the right and left whenever a target appears and when their fire is not required down the valley. This requirement should be kept in view by the company commander when he is deciding upon the actual position of his trenches, especially as regards head cover which is apt to limit the arc of fire from the trenches.

A company placed on the left of the head of a re-entrant might be required to fire along the slope of the spur on its left and also over the top of the spur on its right, as well as down the valley, the first and second requirements being the most important and ruling the selection of the exact position for the fire trench.

An alternative method of defence would be to hold the back line as the main position and place advanced posts on the point of the spurs. As will be seen later (*vide* page 313) advanced posts are always difficult to deal with, and do not invariably increase the strength of the resistance offered, especially in the present case, where the ground is perfectly open, where the trenches would be very exposed, and where retreat and reinforcement, except in the nature of a counter-stroke, are practically out of the question. This problem will, however, be dealt with more fully later.

If the ground is not very bare, but affords a certain amount of cover, in the way of scrub, trees, enclosures, &c., the advantage of the forward position at the foot of the spurs is increased, because reinforcements can be sent

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down to the trenches by carefully selected routes which are somewhat concealed from the enemy's view and fire. It should not be difficult for the artillery of the defence to find good observing positions on the high ground in rear of the infantry and well-concealed positions for the greater portion of the guns.

The disadvantages of the position along the points of the spurs and across the valleys between are not so great as when the ground is perfectly open, because reinforcements can be sent down to the trenches as in the last case, and the artillery can find good positions on the high ground in rear and sufficiently far away to prevent any danger to the defending infantry from the premature bursting of their shells. The points of the spurs, however, will still be very exposed to the artillery and infantry fire of the attack, and the effect of the infantry fire of the defence will not be so sweeping as when the trenches are placed below the point of the spur. Such a position along the points of the spurs would be suitable for a delaying action, when it is intended to make the enemy deploy and deliver a heavy attack and then withdraw; or for a rear-guard action. In such a case dead ground immediately in front of our company fire trench would be unimportant, and the object would be to cause the enemy heavy loss before the final stages of the attack are developed. For this reason the trenches might be sited rather farther back than when a stubborn defence to the last is required. This will involve an increased area of dead ground immediately in front of the trench, but it will give better command over the more distant ground which the attack must traverse and will facilitate the ultimate withdrawal of the defenders.

The backward line along the head of the valleys between the spurs would provide such a bad field of fire, with the ground covered with trees, bushes, &c., and

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would in addition have the same disadvantages as in the case of country which is perfectly open, that it need not be considered. It might be useful, however, for a delaying action, but would not be so good as the last position discussed, because the enemy would get very close to the position before the struggle for fire superiority commenced, and it would be difficult for the defenders to withdraw without heavy loss.

Villages, woods, farm enclosures, lakes, &c., frequently cause a break in the general line of defence; they may be classified under three headings:

(*a*) When they are situated actually on the position, although perhaps projecting out of the main line of defence towards the front, and must be defended if the position is to be held.

(*b*) When they are clear of the general line of defence, but so close to it that the question arises as to whether they are to be included in that line or held as advanced posts.

(*c*) When they are so far in front of the main line of defence that it is doubtful whether they should be held as advanced posts or neglected altogether.

In all these cases the first point to consider is whether the far edge of the locality is exposed to the artillery fire of the attack. In doubtful cases, such as (*b*) and (*c*) above, the answer to this question will frequently decide the other question as to whether it is to be held or not. If the enemy can make a combined infantry and artillery attack upon such a locality, which can be met only by infantry fire on the defenders' side, it is better to avoid the locality if that is possible. If, on the other hand, the defence can arrange infantry and artillery fire against a possible infantry attack only, the scale would turn the other way. Another important factor in the problem would be the nature of the field of fire in front of the

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locality, especially as compared with that in other parts of the position. When the field of fire in front of the locality is very good and extends over a considerable area which is not visible from the main position, it might be advisable to defend the locality as an advanced post. When, on the other hand, the field of fire from the main position includes the greater part of the ground in front of the advanced post, the fire from the latter being indifferent, it would be better as a rule not to occupy it. The possibility of reinforcing the garrison of the locality from the main line of defence and withdrawing the garrison if required would also affect the problem. These are considerations very briefly stated which will apply to most localities situated in front of the main line of defence, but there are many other points connected with the situation and the ground which will influence the final decision.

We will now follow the fortunes of our company which is detailed to form part of the defence of such a locality as is mentioned in (*a*) above: a village, wood, or enclosure of some kind which is situated actually in the general line of defence and must therefore be provided with an adequate garrison. Taking first the case of the village, it will be found as a rule that a street or road runs through the village and not outside the edge, that access to the houses is gained from that street, that the buildings are all close to the street, and that the outside edge of the village consists of walls, enclosing small gardens or outhouses for cattle, fowls, wagons, &c. The point we are aiming at is that we need not invariably defend the actual houses, and when that is the case we need not go into the houses, and if we can keep our men out of them we shall greatly improve our power of defence.

The field of fire from outbuildings or enclosures is, as a rule, better than from the house itself, because the

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former interfere with the view from the latter; the enemy's artillery fire will not be so effective or so demoralising outside a house as inside it, the defenders will not be driven out by the buildings catching fire, and it is much easier and quicker to construct efficient trenches and even provide head cover than to place an ordinary dwelling-house in a state of defence. When, however, the village or building is not exposed to the artillery fire of the attack, and there is a good field of fire to be obtained by loopholing the walls, there is no doubt that they afford the means of prolonged resistance, because they are almost impervious to direct assault, and the experience of war shows that when properly defended they rarely succumb to an attack unless subject to bombardment or unless surrounded on every side by the enemy; but they always appear to absorb a garrison far exceeding in numbers the actual requirements of the extent of front occupied, and there is little doubt that many men who go into a village or building take no part in its defence.

Our company commander will prefer probably to construct his defences behind the enclosures rather than inside the buildings, and, if a better fire position can be obtained still farther to the front without unduly exposing the men he will not even occupy the enclosures. His chief care will be to ensure that a watchful eye is kept upon his supports, that the strictest discipline is maintained and that approaches to the fire trenches are selected so as to avoid entering a house if possible. If the buildings in rear of the fire trench are set on fire by the enemy's shells it is probably best to let them burn, because if the supports are employed in endeavouring to put out the fire they probably will not be very successful; they will expend a great deal of energy in the operation, and they will lose their fighting cohesion and may not be

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available to reinforce the fighting line when required. When, however, the smoke from the burning buildings obscures the field of fire every effort must be made to extinguish the fire.

When the company is called upon to occupy several buildings as part of the defence of a village, whether exposed to hostile artillery fire or not, it is best to allot one section or half-company to each building, the section finding its own support. By this means there is less chance of men straying away. Great care must be taken to guard against fire, especially when the ground floor is occupied by the defenders and the upper story is unoccupied, because the fire is apt to start and get beyond control before it is observed. The construction of the loopholes through the walls will be the chief defensive measure to supervise, because they are apt to be badly made and provide an indifferent field of fire. Each room should be garrisoned by one group under its own leader, and both the section and company commanders will have to visit the various parts of the defended buildings with great frequency so as to ensure that effective fire is being maintained and the various groups and sections are complete in numbers. It is probable that most company commanders would avoid a house like a plague if they possibly could, especially when it is exposed to hostile artillery fire; and they would not be far wrong, because in the majority of cases it would be better to occupy a fire position, even if more exposed, in front of the buildings than inside them.

In the case we are studying, however, the village might project in front of the general line of defence and thus form a salient, in which case it might be undesirable to increase the salient by going farther forward, and it might be necessary to place some of the companies, or parts of them, inside the buildings.

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In the defence of villages it appears to be highly desirable to form some sort of reduit in the centre, which can be held even if the enemy succeed in capturing the rest of the village. The continued defence of such a locality will be of the greatest assistance in recapturing the village by means of a counter-stroke, because, if the position is well chosen, the enemy will have great difficulty in establishing an efficient defence. A company which is told off for such a duty must understand that the locality selected has to be held to the last man, that their duties only commence when the rest of the village has been captured, and the successful defence of the whole position may depend on their efforts. Since the selection of the locality will probably fall to the lot of the company commander, and since it is desirable that the men should understand why one place is better than another, it will not be out of place to consider the requirements of the situation, although these requirements can but rarely be fulfilled entirely.

Perhaps the most important point is the field of fire, which will be very limited in extent, and must therefore be good in other ways. An open space in the centre of a village, although it commands all the roads leading through the village, is useless, because the enemy could get into the houses all round and fire down upon the defenders from the upper windows. It is necessary, therefore, to select some sort of building which is not commanded by other buildings, which cannot be reached from the roofs of other houses, and which is sufficiently detached to obviate the possibility of the enemy burning out the defenders by setting fire to an adjacent house Do not let us lose sight of our main object, which is to assist a counter-stroke and prevent the enemy from establishing an efficient defence on the defenders' side of the village. If we choose a building on the rear edge of the

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village, we may be able to bring fire to bear along that edge, and thus hamper the enemy, but our building would be exposed to the fire from our own position, and it is doubtful if we could do much in such a locality to trouble the enemy seriously.

We should probably be a greater thorn in his side if we occupied a building, or a group of buildings, near the centre of the village, where we could command at least two roads; and it would be better to command the roads that run through the village from flank to flank than those running from front to rear. A church or a school stands, generally, by itself, and is close to the road. A church, however, is not very well suited for this type of defence, because there is no upper story, and the walls are generally very thick and difficult to loophole, and it is not always easy to fire out of the windows. A church with a tower or belfry might be suitable, except that very few rifles could be placed in the belfry, or on the roof of the tower. Probably the best locality would be a group of detached buildings, from the upper stories of which an effective fire could be maintained down the most important road, with a suitable position for the battalion machine guns which might be allotted to the company on such an occasion. If this group of buildings is at some cross or branch roads, or at a bend in the most important road, a more efficient fire could be arranged for. The next consideration is the back door, because the building or group of buildings must be defended on all sides, and this is where we shall meet with our greatest difficulty. The field of fire will be very short, and it is essential that the windows of our upper story command, or are at least level with, the windows of other houses in the neighbourhood. If this is not the case we must arrange our loopholes so as to command those windows. All that we have to face is an infantry

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attack with the bullet, because the enemy's artillery could not fire at our buildings, even if their gunners knew where they were, for fear of hitting their own men in the village. We are not subject to a bayonet assault because we should have barricaded all means of entrance, so that if we avoid the danger of the place catching fire, and if we can use our rifles even at the shortest range to prevent the enemy from forcing an entrance, we should be able to do all that is required. It is probable that plenty of time would be available to improve the field of fire and to prepare the defences before the enemy could carry the rest of the village, and this time should be fully employed without losing a moment.

The system of defending a wood which extends actually across the main line of defence and forms a salient to that line, depends upon the width of front it occupies, how far it extends towards the enemy, the excellence or otherwise of the field of fire along the front, and whether it is exposed to the artillery as well as to the infantry fire of the attack. If the wood is very narrow, it is best to make a clearing through it and construct the trenches a little in advance of the main line of defence, every effort being made to improve the field of fire from the defenders' side of the clearing by removing the undergrowth in the wood beyond. The enemy's side of the clearing should be cut in the shape of a **W**, with the pointed angles towards the defenders, so as to increase the difficulty of delivering an assault across the clearing. The edge should be entangled, and enfilade fire arranged along the sides of the **W**.

By this means the disadvantage of a salient in the general line of defence is obviated, and although cover for the attack on a narrow front is provided by the wood, it is likely to prove a disadvantage to the enemy because his companies will crowd into the cover and will not be able

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to get forward and carry the defenders' side of the clearing by assault.

In cases where the wood occupies a wider front, say exceeding fifty yards, and extends some hundred yards or more in front of the main line of defence, there is no doubt it is a weak part of the line, especially when the far edge is exposed to hostile artillery fire. In order to reduce the salient thus formed in the defensive position it is advisable to place the main line of defence farther forward when possible. When the front edge of the wood is parallel to the general line of defence the fire trenches should be constructed as far inside the wood as the view and field of fire permit so as to avoid the heavy artillery and infantry fire which will be directed against the clearly defined edge. Flank trenches should also be prepared along the sides of the wood when the latter are perpendicular to the line of defence, and should be placed as far inside the wood as possible to avoid enfilade fire. They should be constructed in steps, each trench facing half-right or half-left towards the front of the attack, and echeloned in rear of the one in front of it. When the undergrowth is thick it is very important to cut a path leading from the position of each support to the fire trench it will be required to reinforce; by this means the possibility of supports crowding into one part of the line of defence will be avoided. The most strict discipline must be maintained in the supporting sections, and when required to reinforce they must be moved up in close order until just before reaching the fire trench.

When the front edge of the wood is not parallel to the general line of defence the trenches should be constructed in steps, each trench directly facing the attack and echeloned in rear of the one in front of it, the trenches, as before, being placed as far inside the wood as possible. When the flank edge of the wood forms an obtuse angle

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with the main line of defence, the trenches should be constructed in steps, each trench facing as nearly towards the front as possible.

If any part of the front edge of the wood is in a V-shape with the point of the V towards the enemy, the angle must be cut away and a fire trench facing direct to the front placed behind it.

When the edge of the wood is irregular in shape, the fire trenches along the front edge must be constructed, when possible, to face directly towards the attack, one trench being echeloned in rear of the other when necessary; the fire trenches along the flank of the wood being similarly placed in echelon and facing as much towards the front as the shape of the wood will permit. In all cases the portion of the wood which is nearest to the enemy must be the most carefully defended, and if any obstacles are placed in front of the wood this is the locality which should be selected for them. The defence of the Niederwald and Froeschweiler woods at Worth, the Gifert wood at Spicheren, and the woods south-east of Verneville at Gravelotte, would form an interesting study of what might have been done to strengthen the defence in each case.

A very extensive wood, which practically cuts the position in two, is probably as difficult for the attack to deal with as for the defence, but such a problem need not be discussed here because it can hardly affect any question of company training, unless a line of defence is taken up right through the wood. In such a case each company would occupy the most commanding ground available, do its utmost to clear the field of fire in front, and cut communications with the supporting sections in rear. If plenty of time, say four hours, is available, the defence should be so strong that no attack could hope to assault with success, owing to the difficulty of organising an assault

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and to the great confusion which would almost certainly have arisen during the previous advance though the wood. Suggestions regarding the method of making a clearing will be found on page 318.

Farm buildings, if exposed to hostile artillery fire, should not be occupied by the defending company if it can possibly be avoided. The disadvantages already mentioned when dealing with buildings in a village are accentuated because the farm is standing by itself and is thus an easier mark for the guns of the attack. It is best to site the fire trenches well beyond the buildings, especially when the walls and banks forming the enclosures round the buildings can be utilized and a sort of redoubt constructed. Farms, hamlets, and single buildings with their enclosures appear to attach to themselves an importance on a battle-field for which it is not always easy to find a reason. When studying an account of a battle we frequently read of the most strenuous and prolonged efforts either to defend or assault such a locality, even in cases where it seems doubtful whether it was sound tactics to hold the place at all. It is evident, therefore, that when our company finds itself defending such a place, even when it is tucked away in the middle of a wood, like the Albrechtshauserhof Farm at Worth, a very heavy attack must be expected, and every effort must be made to defeat it. A locality such as a lake or swamp which lies across part of the general line of defence would rarely require any defence at all, except that fire positions might be prepared in rear to flank other parts of the general line of defence, or to cover dead ground.

We now come to a consideration of the defence of small localities which are close to the main position but which are too far in front to be included in the general line of defence. The question whether such a locality should be defended or not would be decided in most

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cases by a higher authority than the company commander. It is desirable, nevertheless, that all ranks in the company should know why such a place is sometimes defended and sometimes left alone.

If the locality affords a covered approach to the attack, if, when occupied, the attack will possess a good fire position where it would not be difficult to obtain superiority of fire over the defence, it is essential that it should be defended. Such a locality might be a small hill which possibly commands some of the trenches in the main position, or places the attack on equal terms with the defence as regards cover from view and fire, and where the ground beyond cannot be seen from any other part of the position. Again, the field of fire between the main position and the locality in front might be very bad, and it might be difficult for the defence to fire on the near edge. If, on the other hand, both the artillery and infantry fire of the defence can be brought to bear on the near side of the locality, and if a great deal of the ground beyond it can be seen from the main position, there would be no object in occupying it, because if the attack gets so far, it is probable that large numbers of men will crowd into it, and thus offer an excellent target to the defence, and will be quite unable to gain superiority of fire or advance any closer to deliver an assault.

A very important point regarding which the company commander should be careful to obtain definite instructions before making his arrangements for defence, is whether the locality is to be held to the last, or whether, when it is quite evident that the attack has gained superiority of fire and is advancing close enough to assault, the defenders are to draw back to the main position. In the first case arrangements would be made to reinforce the defenders of the locality, which would be intended to stand and repulse an assault; in the second

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case the line of retreat to the main position would require careful attention. These considerations might easily affect the actual siteing of the trenches; for example, if the locality is a hill there might be a better field of fire from the foot of the forward slope than from behind the crest line, in which case the advanced position would be selected if an assault is to be withstood, and the retired position if the locality is to be given up when the enemy obtains superiority of fire and is about to assault.

From experience in war it appears that definite instructions in this respect are the keystone of the defence, because the most important localities have been lost to the defence owing to the fact that the garrison did not know that it was to be held at all costs. So far as our company is concerned, the defence of the locality when it is to be held to the last will be the same as though it was part of the main line of defence, with the important exception that one or both flanks of the company may not be so secure. If three companies are allotted for the garrison, the centre company will have no anxiety about its flanks; the other two companies, however, will each be uneasy as to the safety of its outer flank. When possible, these outer flanks should be protected by fire, especially machine-gun and artillery fire, from the main position. In this connection it is well to note that it is not so important to be able to fire from the main position over the ground immediately on the flanks as it is to fire over ground which may be occupied by the enemy, and whence they may hope to obtain superiority of fire over the defenders of the locality. Of course, both are desirable, but the last is more valuable to the defence than the first. Whatever the ground plan of the locality may be, efforts should be made to site the trenches so that those along the front edge directly face the attack, and those on the side edges are not subject to enfilade

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fire but face half-right or half-left towards the attack, being echeloned one in rear of the other. The general line of the side trenches should form, when possible, an obtuse angle with the line of the trenches in front of the locality; this obtuse angle should not, however, be obtained by sacrificing any part of the possible length of the trenches along the front line.

Careful arrangements would be required to ensure the reinforcement of the trenches when necessary, and this would involve marking or cutting tracks through the gardens in a village or through a wood, and in some cases providing cover from fire for the supports and covered approaches to the fire trenches. It is extremely undesirable to occupy any buildings in such a locality when it is exposed to hostile artillery fire, and even when this is not the case a slightly inferior fire position outside a building would probably result in a more organized and protracted defence than one established inside. Buildings which could not possibly be fired upon by quick-firing guns are rarely totally immune from a still more dangerous weapon in such cases—the howitzer. The officer commanding a howitzer battery can select a covered advance, closely follow the infantry attack, place his howitzers in any hidden spot, no matter how deep the depression, choose an observing place right in the infantry line of attack if absolutely necessary, and lob high explosive or shrapnel shell over the heads of the attacking infantry on to the target, even when the former are only fifty or a hundred yards away from the latter. There is little doubt that both in attack and defence the howitzer is looked upon by the infantry as its own particular weapon, and there is some reason for this partiality. Perhaps when practising combined field firing with infantry and artillery working together, it may be possible in future to use howitzers more extensively than in the past, because reasons of safety as regards

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firing over the heads of the infantry in front do not apply to this weapon as they do to an eighteen-pounder gun. It is a great encouragement to infantry either in attack or defence to hear the artillery pounding away in rear and to see their shells bursting just in front of them over the heads of the enemy ; and when the howitzers are in action close behind the infantry they afford a comfortable feeling of security and increase the energy and dash which is required to initiate and carry out an assault. It is not intended for a moment to suggest that the quick-firer is not held in the highest estimation by the infantry, but merely to accentuate the great value of the howitzer, which is sometimes left out in the cold.

Localities the rear edge of which are some five or six hundred yards in front of the general line of defence, come under the heading of advanced posts, and it is necessary to study the principles involved in their occupation by the defending troops. Some authorities are in favour of occupying a series of advanced posts in front of the main defensive position, the idea being that they will come more or less as a surprise to the attack, and greatly delay or disorganize its advance. There is no doubt that this is perfectly true ; the only disturbing element is the question as to what is to become of the troops who are defending these advanced posts when they are driven back by the attack, because there must be some limit to their defence, otherwise they would form the main line of defence. Any idea of occupying two definite lines of defence, one behind the other, does not appear to be in accordance with the great principle of war, that superior force must be concentrated at the decisive point. If the front line of defence is to stand an assault it will in all probability be defeated, because the whole effort of the defender has not been concentrated to prevent it. These defeated troops, apart from all questions as regards

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their lines of retreat, masking the fire from the main position, &c., will be of little further use for the defence of the second position in rear. This second position will then be attacked, and again the defence will be unable to concentrate all the force they originally had available at the decisive point; with the result that the defenders, by adopting two positions, are laying themselves open to defeat in detail.

It appears from these arguments that it is undesirable to hold a series of advanced posts in front of positions with a view to their defence at all costs, or even to a very prolonged defence when heavily attacked. If this is the case, we must consider how they should be defended, and it is not difficult to discover one way out of the dilemma. We hear very little about outposts in front of a defensive line of battle, and yet such protective troops are very useful when properly disposed; and these advanced posts appear to form suitable positions as rallying points, or even on occasions as part of the outpost line. Every one understands that outposts are not intended to fight a battle and repulse a heavy attack, so that when they are compelled to fall back the troops in the main position do not suffer from any loss of *morale* thereby. If, however, there are two lines of defence, the defenders in the second line, seeing those in the front line defeated, might anticipate a similar fate for themselves. It appears to be undesirable, therefore, to occupy a series of advanced posts in front of the main line of defence and consider them as part of the general scheme of defence, and that it is better to look upon the garrisons of such advanced posts as outposts, intended partly to surprise the enemy, partly to expose him to hostile infantry fire during an early stage of his advance, and partly to disclose the exact direction and strength of his attack. The method of occupying localities of this

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nature will be considered, therefore, under the heading of outposts, and will be dealt with in Chapter XX.

The definite occupation of a single and isolated locality, the rear edge of which is some five or six hundred yards in front of the main position, appears to be even less desirable than to hold a series of such localities along the front of the main position. The enemy would be able to make a more or less converging attack against it, especially as regards artillery fire; it would be very difficult to reinforce it, and the only occasion when it appears to be at all useful for definite and prolonged defence is when it is required to assist in the delivery of a decisive counter-stroke at a somewhat early stage in the battle. On such an occasion the garrison required for the defence must be amply sufficient for the purpose, and all the troops, including supports and local reserves, must be placed actually in the locality, or in some covered position close in rear, because when the attack has developed it will be very costly to despatch reinforcements from the main position to the advanced post unless a covered approach is available.

If such an isolated locality is to be held, it appears essential to provide as much artillery assistance from the main position as possible, and to strengthen the infantry garrison with an unusually large proportion of machine guns, provided suitable positions can be found for them. The infantry garrison must be prepared to experience a very heavy artillery and infantry attack, and every effort should be made to provide efficient head cover, which when possible should be bomb proof.

Perhaps the most important lesson for the company to learn is that exposed positions, and even isolated localities, must be defended sometimes, so as to strengthen, or even ensure, the defence of the main position. The examples given alreadv will bear out the truth of this

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statement, and it will rest with the company to do their utmost in the way of entrenching, clearing the foreground, and constructing head cover, &c., to establish a defence which no attack can overcome. Whenever engineers are sent to assist the company they should be employed entirely upon work which requires skilled labour, such as the construction of head cover, the demolition of some difficult obstruction to the field of fire, or the construction of artificial obstacles. The company commander should not look upon the engineers as a reinforcement to labour, but to skill and efficiency in the general system of defence adopted by him.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE COMPANY IN DEFENCE

CLEARING THE FIELD OF FIRE AND THE USE OF NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL OBSTACLES

It is always open to consideration whether it is best to commence work on a position occupied for defence by constructing the trenches or by clearing the foreground. When there are more men available as working parties than the number which is actually required to occupy the fire trenches at one time, both operations can proceed simultaneously. The most important matter to decide is the exact site of the fire trenches, because a good deal hinges on their position. Unfortunately, however, it is not always easy to fix the site of the fire trench until some part of the ground in front has been cleared. For example, the company commander may decide upon placing the fire trenches on or near the top of a hill or ridge and clear away all bushes, small woods, or other obstructions to view and fire. Having thus laid bare the actual surface of the ground he may discover that it would have been much better to place the trenches at the foot of the hill, because now that the ground has been cleared the field of fire from this lower position is in some respects, especially as regards the trajectory of the bullet (*vide* page 272), better than the position on the top. By this time, however, the ground has been laid bare from the top of the hill to the foot, and bushes or trees which

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would have been very useful to conceal the advance of reinforcements to the fire trench at the foot of the hill, have been removed. It is evident that the company commander must use his imagination and endeavour to realize what the ground will be like when it has been cleared.

We will now consider the different types of clearing that have to be made, commencing with what perhaps is most difficult, a line of defence which has to run for some distance through a wood. In such a case the field of fire can never be extensive, and therefore it must be made as as perfect as time, labour, and human ingenuity will permit. If the time is very limited all efforts should be directed towards clearing a field of fire rather than constructing trenches, extra labour is urgently required in any case and should be provided, human ingenuity must be applied to making the best of a bad job, and it is on this perhaps more than anything else that success will depend. Let us summarize the requirements of the case and then see what can be done to fulfil them.

(1) The fire position must be selected so that the trajectory of the bullet will sweep the whole of the clearing within a few feet of the surface.

(2) The actual ground line of the far side of the clearing must be seen from the fire position.

(3) The fire position itself should be on commanding ground when possible; and since the field of fire is very short, this requirement is not likely to clash with (1).

(4) The plan of the far edge of the clearing must be designed so as to break up the attack and make it extremely difficult for the enemy to organize and deliver an assault across the clearing.

(5) The trees and undergrowth which are cut down

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must be disposed of so that they do not interfere with the defence, especially when they are in leaf.

(6) The defenders' side of the clearing should, as far as possible, be constructed in a straight line, so as to avoid any salients where the lines of fire across the clearing would be like the spokes of a wheel and would lose in volume and effect.

(7) Tracks must be marked by blazing the trees or other means, from the position of each support to the fire trench it is required to reinforce, and from the local reserve to the position of each support. A line of communication parallel to the clearing should also be marked along the line of the supports, and if possible from one local reserve to another. Every man in each supporting section must know the way to the fire position in front.

(8) When labour and time are limited the clearing should be made first, the enemy's side made difficult for the attack to emerge second, communications from the supports to the fire position third, and the fire trench last.

(9) When plenty of labour is available all of the steps mentioned in (8) can be carried out simultaneously.

(10) The clearing must be commenced along the whole of the defenders' side at once, because it is better to have a small clearing right through the wood than a wide clearing completed in one part only.

(11) Obstacles should be constructed along the enemy's side of the clearing, but not actually in the clearing, unless a wire obstacle is made which will give no cover to the attack.

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Taking these requirements in turn, it should not be difficult with such a limited field of fire to arrange that the bullets of the defenders sweep the whole of the ground across the clearing, and can be aimed at the ground-line on the opposite edge. Convex slopes should be avoided, either by siteing the fire position at the foot of the hill where the slope changes, or behind the crest where the ground is usually flat. Every effort, however, should be made to site the fire position on the most commanding ground available in the wood. Of course this is not always possible, because the general line of the clearing must conform to the general line of defence beyond the wood. In fact it is better to make the clearing a little in advance of the line of defence in the open, because the companies that are defending the latter will feel more secure, and less anxious about the wood on their flank, which might be looked upon as an easy means of approach for the enemy, instead of being, as is actually the case, a very difficult one; because it is almost impossible for the enemy to deploy and organize a simultaneous attack when they reach the clearing.

Probably the best manner of dealing with the far edge of the clearing is to cut it in plan in the shape of the teeth of a saw, the points of the teeth pointing towards the defenders' side of the clearing, the side of each tooth being twenty or thirty yards long. If, in addition, we place a machine-gun at each flank of the clearing, and cut two rides running like a V with the point towards the enemy, so that the machine-guns can fire down these rides, the position would be practically impregnable. The enemy before reaching the edge of the clearing would have to cross the V-shaped rides and would be fired upon by the machine-guns, they would then come to the edge of the clearing and crowd into the points of the teeth of the saw or form a front along the side of

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each tooth where they would be enfiladed by the defenders, and it is fairly certain that they would get no farther, even if the defenders had had no time to construct fire trenches. The most serious difficulty of all is the disposal of the trees and undergrowth which are cut down, especially when they are in leaf. A certain number can be stripped of their leaves and used to create an obstacle along the sides of the teeth of the saw, leaving a gap at the point so that the defenders can fire along the edge of each tooth, but there will still be a good deal left. Some of it can be piled along the defenders' side of the clearing to hide the men when they put up their heads to fire, some may be burnt, and some may be dragged inside the teeth of the saw, provided it is not near the edge where it might interfere with the fire of the defence and give cover to the attack. Large trees would be left standing, and any trunks of trees which may be left in the clearing should lie straight across it, the tip or butt pointing towards the enemy. Otherwise there should be nothing at all left in the clearing which can possibly interfere with the fire of the defenders or give cover to the attack. In a wood with big trees and no undergrowth, the tree trunks are rarely very close together, and some of them can be cut down and the branches, with their leaves stripped, formed into an obstacle, the plan of which would be the same as before, like the teeth of a saw, the object being to make the attackers crowd into the points or face in the wrong direction. It would, probably, be impossible to cut down all the trees, and even if this is done, there would be an enormous mass of branches to get rid of, and in addition the gap formed might be visible to the enemy's gunners, and immunity from hostile artillery fire, which is one of the advantages of this type of defence, would be lost. It would be necessary, however, for section and group commanders in the fire position to allot definite

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directions between the trees that are left standing for each man to fire, so as to ensure that no part of the attack is neglected.

It would not, as a rule, be very difficult to arrange for the clearing to run in a fairly straight line. Although it is desirable that the fire position should be on commanding ground, this is only one factor in the situation, and it might be impossible to make a clearing on commanding ground without exposing the gap to the enemy's guns, which in all cases should be avoided. This being the case, it is not necessary for the clearing to follow exactly the same level, and it is better to allow the attacking troops to be on higher ground in one part of the clearing than the defenders in another part rather than to create a marked salient in the defenders' line, in order to maintain command throughout. A salient on the defenders' side creates a re-entrant on the attacking side, which renders it possible at such a close range for the latter to enfilade part of the former's line of defence, especially when there has been no time to make a satisfactory clearing.

One of the great difficulties in wood fighting is to maintain the cohesion and organization of the operation. Even a company commander cannot see the whole of his company, and with larger bodies the difficulty is increased. The result is that the whole of the available force may not be employed at the right time, and in the right locality; individual men, sections, and sometimes whole companies, stray away or are not forthcoming when required, and any concerted action is usually most difficult to establish. This, of course, applies with greater force to the attack which is advancing through the wood than to the defence which is stationary and can make arrangements to overcome the difficulties. It is important to make the most of this advantage to the

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defence, and the best way to ensure it is to insist upon the strictest discipline amongst the groups and sections, provide avenues of communication, and make certain that every group and section can find its way to any place it may be required to go to.

It has occurred sometimes in war that the defending artillery can fire on the attacking side of the clearing from a position on the flank of the wood; this of course greatly increases the defensive power of the position, and should render it most difficult for the enemy to assault. Our old friend the howitzer could easily assist in the defence of a clearing by occupying a position in the wood in rear of the infantry with a few branches cut away, and with an observing post close up to the infantry line of defence. The chief difficulty would be to get the guns and their wagons through the wood to the place where they are to come into action, and frequently they would be required more urgently in other parts of the general line of defence.

The clearing operations should commence along the defenders' side, the wood-cutters gradually working forwards towards the enemy; by this means the selected line for the fire position will be maintained. When the clearing has been made as wide as time will permit, the points of the saw-shaped edge on the enemy's side will be marked and the V-shaped indentations cleared, all the débris should then be removed from the clearing, the fire trench constructed and the V-shaped rides cleared for the machine guns to fire down. Owing to the roots of the trees it is a lengthy task to dig deep trenches, and they are not necessary in such a situation. The fire trenches are not exposed to artillery fire, they can be entered from the rear completely under cover, they can be screened in front by branches taken from the clearing, and though this will indicate their position the latter will be dis-

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covered in any case directly the attack reaches the edge of the clearing. The fact that they are screened will prevent the enemy from seeing when the men of any group or section put up their heads to fire. It appears to be desirable, therefore, to use all the earth from the trench to raise the parapet in front and thus obtain the necessary cover with a minimum of labour. While this is going on, positions will be selected in rear for the supports, and communications to the fire trenches marked and cleared if necessary.

There are several examples in war of a natural clearing between two woods being held for long periods against all attacks, without any attempt being made to render the exit on the enemy's side more difficult, or to construct fire trenches on the defenders' side; the open spaces between some of the woods at Worth and at Gravelotte are well-known instances. If this could be done with old breech-loading rifles, where a man could not get in more than two or three shots at any enemy endeavouring to rush the clearing, it would be much easier with a magazine rifle, which would permit of more than double the number of rounds being fired in the same time.

The defence of a clearing in a wood does not appear to lend itself to the delivery of a counter-stroke, and we may assume safely that the defenders in this part of the field are required merely to hold their ground. If a counter-stroke is delivered and gains the far side of the clearing, driving back the enemy, it has nothing but a thick wood in front of it with no fire position and little probability of obtaining any decisive result by attempting to continue the attack through the wood. There have been some examples in war of successful counter-strokes through a wood, but they have produced no permanent effect, they have used up a large number of men, and the attack has soon been re-established in the position it had gained formerly.

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It seems to be unsound to state that there is any defensive situation in war when a counter-stroke might not be very valuable, but the conditions required for a successful counter-stroke, as set down in Chapter XII, do not appear to exist. The attack in this case is evidently at a great disadvantage as compared with the defence, and the general scheme of defence as regards the whole position is very unlikely to include a counter-stroke, delivered with the object of winning the battle, through a thick wood. The commander of the force would naturally avoid the wood if that were possible and exclude it from his line of defence, but as we are supposing that he cannot do this, he would naturally endeavour to maintain his defence in the wooded part of the position and seek for offensive action where he can manœuvre all arms in an organized manner, and deliver a blow which, if successful, will win the battle. If, however, our efforts to prevent the enemy from gaining superiority of fire and issuing out of the wood are unsuccessful, it will be absolutely necessary to deliver a counter-stroke and assault across the clearing so as to drive him from the edge and disorganize his attack. It should be much easier for the defence, with its careful arrangements for communication, to organize such an assault than the attack, and in any case the position must be held at all costs.

It occurs, sometimes, that a line of defence runs within a few hundred yards of the edge of a wood. In this case the edge would be cut in the manner already suggested, but the point of each tooth of the saw would be made by dragging the débris from a small V-shaped indentation cut in the wood. This can easily be understood by drawing three lines about half an inch apart. The centre line will represent the existing edge of the wood, the lower line will be where the points of

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the saw come to, and the upper line will be where the teeth join. If we now draw a series of large Ws between the upper and lower line, to represent the teeth of the saw, we shall see that there are a lot of little triangles to be cleared of trees and undergrowth between the upper and centre lines, but no wood in the triangle between the centre and lower line; the débris from the first set of triangles can be placed in the lower set and serve our purpose with a greatly reduced amount of clearing. A defensive line running within a hundred yards of the edge of a wood prepared in this manner would be quite impervious to assault, especially if the defenders' artillery can fire on the edge of the wood.

Any small woods of irregular shape within effective infantry fire from the main position should be treated in the same manner, the object being in all cases to make the near edge in the shape of a V with the point towards the defence. When any part of the edge of a wood runs diagonally across the front of the position it requires no attention, as it will tend to divert the true direction of the attack and may also be enfiladed by the defenders.

It is very difficult to clear away buildings or high banks which interfere with the field of fire, owing to the labour involved and the fact that even when cleared there is usually a large amount of débris which affords cover to the attack. If there is sufficient time available a small building might be burnt out and the walls knocked down as soon as they have cooled sufficiently to go near them. The débris should then be levelled so that it cannot be occupied as a fire position by the enemy.

Buildings in or near a defensive line are always a source of trouble. They form a good ranging mark for the artillery of the attack and a good directing point for the infantry; they provide a certain amount of cover for the latter, because they block a good deal of fire from the

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defenders' position, and they frequently create a salient in the line of defence, because it is found necessary to form a fire position in front of them.

Perhaps the best manner of dealing with them when they are outside the line of defence is to clear away all the enclosures and fences round and leave the bare buildings standing, all inflammable material being removed from inside them in order to decrease the probability of their being set on fire by the enemy's shells, thus creating a cloud of smoke which may obscure more ground in front of the position than the buildings themselves.

The best manner of dealing with banks is to leave those that are perpendicular to the front of the position and those which are diagonally across the front, especially when two of them form a V with the point towards the defenders' position, but a gap should be cleared at the point of the V so that the back of the banks can be enfiladed from the position. Banks which run parallel to the front of the position should be demolished if possible, especially when they are close enough to afford a good fire position from which the enemy can attempt to gain superiority of fire. Failing this, gaps as wide as time and available labour will permit should be cut in them, so as to open up at least a limited field of fire beyond them. Banks which are six hundred yards or more from the position may be a source of trouble to the attack rather than to the defence (*vide* page 64).

When there is a good deal of wood in front of the fire trenches, as in the centre of the French position at Gravelotte, it is desirable to cut rides or gaps diagonally through them, so that a company or section, with perhaps some machine guns, can be posted in the line of defence, or a little behind it, with the express object of firing down each ride, and thus breaking up an attack which is being directed against some other part of the position. A

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company or section detailed for this duty would be taking no part in the immediate defence of the locality where it is posted, this being provided for by other troops. It is advisable that the fire position selected for this company should not be exposed to the fire of the attack, so that the men will always be looking out and ready to fire immediately a target appears crossing the ride or gap. Single bushes or very small woods afford very little cover to the attack and they are useful range marks for the defence, so it is undesirable to destroy them unless they block the view beyond.

When there are numerous small obstructions to view and fire in front of the position, and it is doubtful which to cut down and which to leave, it is a good exercise to tell the company that it is to represent the enemy, and take it out to a position which it could reach before obtaining superiority of fire over the defenders, and then carry on the last two stages of the attack. This will disclose what obstructions will be useful to the attack and should be demolished and what can be left alone. The non-commissioned officers and men will learn a good deal from this, and will understand the reason in every case for clearing the foreground. Whilst this attack is being delivered, a few men under an officer should be left to occupy the position selected for the fire trenches, and they will be able to see what the attack looks like from the defenders' point of view, and also be prepared with recommendations as to what clearing is necessary and which part of the attack would have the most difficult and which the easiest task. This is intended chiefly for instruction, but even in war a proposed site for a defensive fire trench should always be examined by the company commander from the point of view of the attack before a final decision is arrived at. It is also desirable to send out men representing the enemy to advance over standing

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crops, long grass, &c., to ascertain whether the target presented by the attack will be easy or difficult, and during what period of the advance the best target will appear. Steps can then be taken to ascertain the exact range of such localities and provide an aiming mark close by, so that group and section commanders will have no difficulty in allotting targets and distributing their fire. One of the advantages of the defence is that more or less elaborate arrangements can be made to strengthen the resistance by carefully reconnoitring the ground in front, taking every advantage of the favourable features, and minimizing the danger of others.

The only way to clear the field of fire over standing crops which cannot be burnt is to trample them down, a company or section in close order marching to and fro across them. When clearing ground close to the fire trench every effort should be made to avoid creating what will look to the enemy like a straight edge, because it will give him a good idea of the position of the fire trenches, and in many cases will unnecessarily expose the defenders to view. If, on the other hand, such cover from view as is afforded by bushes and scrub is everywhere left when it does not interfere with the field of fire, and the edge of the scrub when looked at from the enemy's side has no clearly defined line, it will be very difficult for the attack to locate the fire trenches or to see the defenders when they put up their heads to fire.

Any natural obstacle such as a stream which runs across the front within effective rifle range of the defenders should be cleared of all obstructions to view, so that the defence can bring fire to bear on both banks and the approaches to them. A few trees or bushes of different appearance should be left here and there along the banks as aiming marks, to assist section and group commanders in directing and distributing the fire of their men.

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The construction of obstacles is closely allied to the clearing of the field of fire, and the material obtained from the latter can be utilized sometimes for the former. The most important fact as regards obstacles, whether natural or artificial, is that they will not seriously delay the attack unless they are exposed to the artillery or infantry fire of the defence, or to a combination of the two. Before considering the localities where obstacles should be placed we must call to mind the main object of the defence, which, in some form or other, is almost invariably to delay the enemy, to make his attack as difficult as possible, to cause him to lose far more men than the defenders, and eventually to attack him in return.

We have seen already that the attacking troops may be delayed at a very early stage of the proceedings if they follow the dictates of human nature and lie down directly they come under a heavy burst of artillery fire. The artillery, therefore, is the arm that can first produce the necessary delay, and we at once want to know whether we must assist the artillery by constructing an obstacle some three or four thousand yards in front of the position. It is doubtful whether an obstacle at such a range will materially delay the attack, and, unless our outposts or our advanced guard are occupying the locality, the enemy will probably discover and destroy the obstacle before he commences his attack. The effect of the burst of an 18-pounder shell is in depth rather than in width, and the enemy when traversing the obstacle will present a wide target, but not necessarily a deep one. It appears, therefore, that artificial obstacles should be constructed within effective range of the defending infantry rather than of the artillery, because, although effective infantry fire is even greater in depth than that of the artillery, when the surface of the ground is parallel to the trajectory of the bullet, its width is only limited by the number of

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rifles employed, and by the power possessed by the company, section, and group commanders to distribute the fire in the correct manner. Of course, it may be argued that artillery also can distribute their fire in width, but it means the expenditure of a good deal of ammunition. If shrapnel shell threw out bullets like the jets of water from an old-fashioned water-cart, instead of like the circular sprays which up-to-date municipalities employ, it might be worth while to construct artificial obstacles at long ranges. In the existing state of affairs it appears to be a waste of time, labour, and material to construct them beyond rifle range of the defended position, unless they are exposed to the infantry fire of our outposts who are withdrawing before the main attack of the enemy. The best position for such an obstacle would be just below the crest on the defenders' side of a ridge or hill, where it will be concealed from his view until he is right upon it. We may take it as a rule, however, that obstacles of an artificial nature would rarely be constructed at a greater distance than a thousand yards from the defenders' position, and many people would fix a much shorter limit. We must remember always that the main object of every obstacle is to delay the enemy's advance or stop it altogether, and that this is arrived at by the obstacle placing the enemy at a disadvantage as regards fire effect.

We have seen already that the attack will press forward as far as it can go, in fact, until it is stopped by the fire of the defenders, and that it will not be able to advance any farther until it has subdued that fire; this alone will create delay. We have decided that in some parts of the line of advance the attack will be able to get within two or three hundred yards of the defence before being brought to a standstill, and in other parts it will not be able to get within five or six hundred yards. It is probable that the fire of the defenders is causing sufficient delay in the

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latter case, and that obstacles in front of this part of the position will be a luxury rather than a necessity. It is evident, however, that those parts of the attacking line which can get within two or three hundred yards of the defence without being stopped by their fire have been peculiarly favoured by the ground, and that the fire of the defence requires supplementing, or strengthening, by the construction of artificial obstacles. Considering that the ground is so favourable to the advance of the attacking troops, it is very unlikely that we can find any suitable site for our obstacle at a distance exceeding five or six hundred yards from our fire trenches; we have seen already that we do not require one in front of that part of our position where we have a good field of fire, so we may take it that our obstacle will be placed, as a rule, somewhere within six hundred yards of our trenches.

Having gained some idea as to the farthest limit for the position of our obstacle, we must consider how close we can place it to our fire trenches. It has been suggested already that when the ground in front of a defensive position affords a good deal of cover to the attack, the essence of defence lies in the delivery of local counter-strokes (*see* p. 225). It is apparent, therefore, that no obstacle can be placed between the fire trenches and the position the attackers are likely to gain before being stopped by the defenders' fire, because our local counter-strokes must be able to attack and assault that position. If, then, we propose to place an obstacle in front of this part of the position, we must carefully examine the ground and select a locality which is beyond the position we intend our local counter-stroke shall gain. It is evident that these considerations will limit us in the selection of a site, and it may not be possible to find any locality which will fulfil the required conditions. It is, nevertheless, highly important that we should place an obstacle

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in front of these fire trenches, because otherwise we have no means of delaying the enemy's advance until he gains a position undesirably close to our own, without suffering much loss during the operation.

So far we have discussed the obstacle with reference to an attack by day, but a situation may arise where the attack is unable to carry our trenches by day and may endeavour to make an assault during the following night. We have seen (*vide* p. 250) that the most suitable ground for this purpose is an open glacis slope, offering no difficulties to an advance by night, and losing all the value it possessed as a fire position by day for the good reason that the defenders cannot see the troops advancing to the attack. It is evident, therefore, that by night we require an obstacle in front of that part of the position which required none by day. The rule as regards obstacles being under effective fire by day applies equally to darkness, and therefore our obstacle must be very close—say, within fifty yards of the trenches—by night This will not interfere with our scheme of defence by day, because we have no object in delivering a local counter-stroke down an open glacis slope, when we can easily keep the enemy at bay with the fire from our rifles. It was also pointed out on p. 249 that ground which afforded a covered approach by day is rarely suited to night attacks, because the very broken nature of the country increases the risk of such an operation. It is possible, however, that broken ground may no longer be found between the fire position occupied by the attack during the day and the defenders' trenches. In this case an obstacle would be most desirable, but it could only be constructed after nightfall, and must be cleared away before daylight next morning, so as to retain the power of counter-attack, without which this part of the position is liable to be carried by assault. A more soldierlike plan would be not to make the obstacle at all,

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but to make a night attack upon the enemy. Since the ground is open as far as the line held by the attack, there appears to be no reason why a counter-stroke, which is likely to be far more effective by night than by day, should not be delivered, and the enemy driven from the position he has gained, which is dangerously close to our line of defence. If, however, a local counter-stroke by night is out of the question, our company must be prepared to build an obstacle in the dark. When we consider the defence of a piquet we shall find that the question of obstacles again crops up and that occasions may arise when they will have to be constructed during the night, so it will be as well to train our company to make an efficient obstacle in perfect silence, without any light, and on the darkest night.

It would be an advantage by day to put a company or section in advance of the main line of defence, in a concealed position, and where it could not mask the fire from the main position, so that a close and heavy fire can be brought to bear on the obstacle. This would be particularly desirable in those parts of the position where the ground is broken or wooded and favours the attack, because it would also favour the retreat of the detachment when compelled to withdraw. Artificial obstacles are such a bar to counter-attack that they should never be constructed by a company forming part of a larger force which is acting on the defensive, without the permission of the officer commanding that force.

We can sum up this discussion by saying that in those parts of a defensive position where there is a good and extensive field of fire, and where the enemy is unlikely to be able to gain superiority of fire and advance close enough to deliver an assault, obstacles are not required by day, because the defenders' rifles are sufficient to hold back the attack. Such parts of the position, however, are more

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subject to night attacks than any other, so that an obstacle should be placed close enough to the trenches to be under effective fire by night. The obstacles can remain during daylight, especially if they are carefully concealed from the view of the enemy, because it is unlikely that any offensive effort will be necessary for the successful defence of this part of the position.

Those parts of the line of defence where the ground in front provides a good deal of cover to the attack require to be strengthened by obstacles during daylight, but since the counter-stroke here is the essence of successful defence, they must be placed beyond the line which it is intended that the local counter-stroke should gain, and this line must be beyond the position which the attack may be expected to reach before being stopped by the fire of the defenders. Although an attack over such ground is unlikely at night, an obstacle must be placed if necessary in front of the fire trenches ; it must be constructed under cover of darkness, and should be removed before daylight so that the necessary active defence may be resumed. It would be better in such a case for the defenders to make a night attack themselves and thus obviate the necessity for the construction of any obstacle in this part of the position.

The difficulties experienced by the attack in the passage of natural obstacles such as streams, woods, &c., have been dealt with at some length in Chapter VIII. It appears to be unnecessary to go over the same ground again, because the defenders, realizing the difficulties of the attack, will naturally do their best to increase them by concentrating fire on any such obstacle, and by sending forward, when possible, advanced detachments to increase the fire effect against it.

When a natural obstacle is within reasonable distance of the defenders' position, and the attack has been

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favoured by broken or wooded country, an opportunity will occur for the delivery of a local counter-stroke, whilst the enemy is endeavouring to establish a fire position on the defenders' side of the obstacle, and before all his leading troops have traversed the obstacle. Such action is particularly suitable for a situation where the obstacle is not under fire from the main position, and where, in consequence, there is no chance of the fire from the main position being masked by the advance of the local counter-stroke. Whenever a counter-stroke of this nature is being delivered the company commanders should be informed whether it is intended that the attack is to culminate in an assault with the bayonet, which would invariably be the case in any other situation, or whether it is intended to advance until a position can be gained whence an effective fire can be brought to bear on the obstacle. Of course, even in the latter case, if the enemy's advanced troops are met before such a fire position is reached they must be assaulted and driven back. It might be possible for an officer from a howitzer battery to accompany this counter-stroke, signal back the position of the infantry, and direct the fire of the battery on to the obstacle over the heads of the infantry.

It is unnecessary to put forward any suggestions as to the construction of obstacles, because the subject is dealt with fully in the official manual dealing with such matters. It is desirable, however, for officers and non-commissioned officers to keep their eyes open when moving about a defensive position, or when on outpost duty, so that they can note the existence in the neighbourhood of such useful articles as wire, timber posts, cutting tools, &c.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE COMPANY IN DEFENCE

A STUDY OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DEFENCE

It was suggested in Chapter XIV that there are six different types of defence, each of which will cause some modification in the selection of the site for the fire trench, in the clearing of the foreground, and in the construction of obstacles. The first mentioned is the ordinary type of defence, where many companies, assisted by the action of the artillery, occupy a position for the purpose of fighting entirely on the defensive, or to take the defensive part in an offensive-defensive battle. We may assume in this type of defence that a certain amount of time is available to prepare the position in the way of constructing fire trenches and obstacles and clearing the foreground. The choice of the site for the fire trenches will depend a good deal upon the amount of time at our disposal, because a fire trench which is well placed when the foreground is cleared, or some necessary obstacle constructed, may be very badly placed if no time is available to do more than prepare hasty entrenchments. It is important, therefore, when the company commander is allotted a certain front to defend, that he should be told the number of hours he is likely to have at his disposal for strengthening his position.

The first matter for the company commander to decide is whether he is going to commence work by constructing

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the fire trench, by making an obstacle or by clearing the foreground, and it is not easy to make any definite statement on the subject which would apply to all occasions. It may be taken, however, as a rule, that the artificial obstacle is the luxury of the defence, and as such would be the last requirement to deal with. It is not so easy to decide as regards the rival claims of the fire trench and of clearing the ground, because several factors must be considered.

If the position is taken up during the afternoon and the outposts are well out to the front, it is unlikely that the enemy will make a decisive attack before the following day, even when the advanced guard has been in action against the enemy's advanced troops. In such a case it will be best to employ a few men to mark out the site of the fire trench and construct a certain amount of cover, whilst the majority are engaged in clearing the foreground. It is easy to dig trenches at night, but it is not easy to choose their position or clear the foreground during the hours of darkness.

When the locality selected for the fire trench is very exposed to the fire of the attack, the ground in front must be fairly open, otherwise the first condition could hardly exist. In such a case it would be advisable to commence work on the fire trench with the majority of the men, and employ the remainder in clearing away the most serious obstructions to view and fire. When the fire position is naturally strong and provides more cover for the defenders than any fire position which the enemy could occupy within five or six hundred yards, it would be advisable to improve the field of fire by clearing the foreground, before constructing the trenches, especially when there is a good deal of obstruction to view and fire. As already pointed out in Chapter XVI, when part of the line of defence runs through a wood, the

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order of importance would be first the clearing, second an obstacle on the enemy's side, and third the fire trench.

The great principle to apply is that the defence must prevent the attack from gaining superiority of fire. In some cases this can be best ensured by giving priority to the fire trench, in other cases by clearing the foreground, and in almost every case the construction of obstacles will come last. It should always be remembered that obstacles can only delay an attack, they will not prevent the attack from gaining superiority of fire, wherever they may be placed. It is essential, therefore, that every company commander should endeavour to fix the position which the attack can reach but cannot pass without gaining fire superiority, and make his arrangements as regards siteing his trench, clearing the foreground, and constructing obstacles, so that the defenders may be in the best possible circumstances to prevent the enemy from subduing the fire from the trenches.

As already pointed out in Chapter XII, the essence of defence in some localities will lie in the local counter-stroke, in which case the fire trench will lose in importance and the foreground will be prepared in such a manner that it is difficult for the enemy to attack and easy for the defenders to deliver a counter-stroke. For example, we will suppose that there is a low ridge three hundred yards in front of the fire trenches, which is covered on both sides with trees, bushes or scrub, and that beyond this ridge the ground was peculiarly favourable to the attack, very little of it being exposed to the fire of the defenders, and yet offering no serious obstacle to the organized advance of the enemy. In such a case the attackers will be certain, sooner or later, to reach the foot of the ridge on the defenders' side, where it is possible they may gain superiority of fire It will be

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essential for the defenders to deliver a counter-stroke and drive back the enemy from this position. It is useless to cut down the wood or scrub on the defenders' side of the ridge, because that will only give the attack a more commanding fire position on the higher ground, but it will be very desirable to cut the edge like the teeth of a saw, without any obstacle along it. This will make it difficult for the attack to establish a fire position, but will not interfere with the delivery of a counter-stroke. The next step will be to clear the wood or scrub on the attackers' side of the ridge, so that the counter-stroke can reach the edge of this clearing and find a good fire position where the companies can confirm their first success and which they can continue to occupy as long as it is necessary and then withdraw without difficulty. On some occasions there may be a fire position in front of the trenches which is useless to the attack, but which with slight improvement can be made eminently suitable as a "ground" objective for a counter-stroke, with a good field of fire towards the enemy. It would be well worth while spending a spare hour in the necessary elaboration of this locality.

The second type of defence, that of the outpost company can be discussed to more advantage when dealing with the service of security, and will be investigated in Chapter XIX.

The third type of defence is that of an advanced guard or an attack thrown suddenly on the defensive by the action of the enemy. In the first case it means either that the enemy has been met in greatly superior numbers or that there has been delay or lack of initiative in the action of our advanced guard, and the enemy has been allowed to commence and press home an attack. The only other possible cause appears to be that the advanced guard has been surprised, which seems so impossible that it is hardly

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worth considering, and yet it has occurred on more than one occasion in war.

One delay may be followed by another and the company commander may find his company being heavily attacked and have no instructions as to whether he is to defend the ground he is at present occupying or whether he is to retire to some other position in rear. In such circumstances success will depend entirely upon the initiative of the company commander; it is important, therefore, that every company commander in the advanced guard should be imbued with the same ideas so that the action of each will suit that of the other.

The first essential is to get the company into the best fire position in the immediate neighbourhood. If this position is to be found in front of the company all the better, the very fact of getting the company forward, even for a few yards only, will do much to improve the moral of the men. If it is out of the question to make any advance, and the position occupied by the company cannot be held without the extreme probability of losing superiority of fire in a very short time, a fire position must be occupied in rear, but no more ground should be given up to the enemy than can possibly be avoided. The company commander must remember that reinforcements are close behind him, and that any wavering or rapid retreat may easily lead to disaster. Every inch of ground must be disputed with the utmost tenacity, and immediately a good fire position is reached the company and its commander must be prepared to defend it to the last, which means that the enemy must be attacked if he gains superiority of fire, and there is any prospect of his approaching close enough to deliver an assault. The safety of the whole of the main body in rear and the success or failure of the subsequent battle may depend upon the vigorous action of these few companies with the

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advanced guard who have been thrown suddenly on the defensive.

The company has one advantage over the enemy: it has just passed over the ground, and, if the commander and his officers have been properly trained in peace they will have been examining that ground, the former will know at once what orders to give his section commanders and the latter will be ready to meet them half-way. A company that is well trained and whose men have thorough confidence in themselves, their rifles, their bayonets, their comrades and their officers should be able to deal with an awkward situation of this kind without serious risk of disaster, especially if they have realized the difficulties during peace training, have learnt how to overcome them, and above all can retain their power of offensive action.

It should not be supposed that a predicament of this nature is brought about necessarily by the action or neglect of any higher commander; it may have arisen through circumstances beyond his control, such as the capture of some of his cavalry, misleading information or foggy weather. It may be that the advanced guard is in difficulties on its flank, or is involved in the passage of a serious obstacle. It is very easy for a subordinate commander in his own mind to throw the blame on a superior, but such ideas will not win a skirmish or stave off a disaster. The whole of our training aims at inducing initiative and sound leading on the part of company officers, and is meant to meet a situation of this nature when no orders are available, and not merely to enable the company to operate with success when every one in it has been told exactly what to do.

The case of an attack being thrown suddenly on the defensive is not a very serious matter for the company commander because the whole resources of the attacking force are available to meet the danger and restore the

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fight. The object of every company should be to remain on the defensive as short a time as possible and seize the earliest opportunity to renew the attack. The ground will not be the same in all parts of the line of battle, and those companies which are favoured by the nature of the country in front should press forward and thus relieve the strain on other companies which are not so well placed. Although thrown temporarily on the defensive the offensive spirit is even more important on such an occasion than when the company is taking part in a stereotyped defensive battle, and it must be remembered that the longer the companies, who are suddenly thrown on the defensive when attacking, continue that attitude the less prospect there is of getting them to renew the attack.

We are all perfectly aware that every attack cannot succeed, but we also know that if each company is imbued with the idea of continuing the attack in spite of a temporary check, some companies peculiarly favoured by the ground will not lose their momentum if properly trained and led, and these companies will prevent the whole attack from dying out. The object of the company commander when thrown on the defensive will be to gain superiority of fire over the enemy at the earliest possible moment, and then advance to a position which is close enough for the assault to be delivered.

In this manner the enemy is at once met with a resistance which he cannot overcome, he himself is thrown on the defensive in his turn, and instead of thinking about delivering an assault he will be apt to become absorbed in the question as to how he is to maintain the position he has reached. On an occasion of this kind we sometimes lose an opportunity for successful action by failing to realize that the enemy is no better off than we are, and that success depends quite as much upon maintaining our fortitude as upon good fire positions and

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good shooting, for the reason that the last two can rarely be achieved without the first. At the same time a good fire position is of great assistance to us both from a moral and from a good shooting point of view, and if such a position can be found in front of the company, and occupied, we shall at least commence with the chances in our favour. If on the other hand the company has to fall back to a fire position, other companies may follow its example, and the enemy will not only have thrown our attack on the defensive, but he will also have thrown it back. An attack is like a ball thrown along rough ground: it is constantly being checked by small obstructions, and the distance it goes depends entirely upon the energy stored up inside it. A retreat is like a ball thrown down a hill: small obstructions will not stop it, and it will go faster and faster, not because of the energy stored up inside it, but because of the force of gravity, which, acting similarly to human nature in the individual, draws it on with ever-increasing force. It appears, therefore, to be of the greatest importance to prevent our company from falling back, and that it is far better to continue to occupy an indifferent fire position than to seek a better one in rear. It should be remembered that the reserve companies and the second line in rear will be moving forward as rapidly as possible to assist the front line, and the arrival of these reinforcements should be the signal for a forward move. Any advance even for a few yards will at once change the whole moral aspect of the situation and instil new life into the troops, the defence will change to the attack, and the enemy in the position he has reached may be very badly placed to meet a fresh attack. In any case our attack and assault ought not to be so difficult as against his main position.

The next type of defence is when an advanced guard or an attack after completing its operations and driving

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back the enemy is required to make good the ground captured. This is a far more satisfactory situation to deal with than the last, because the moral of the troops is exceedingly high, and they have just proved to themselves and to the enemy that they can attack with success. Taking first the case of the advanced guard: the enemy's leading troops have not only been thrown on the defensive but have been driven back, and, as already pointed out, it will be difficult for him to initiate a fresh attack unless he is strongly reinforced. The successful action of our advanced guard may, however, so materially affect the prospects and intentions of the enemy, that it will be essential for him to regain the ground which has been lost, and therefore he may send forward fresh troops for the purpose. Our attack having been successful, the advanced guard commander can make more elaborate arrangements than is possible in an ordinary encounter engagement when the force is thrown on the defensive against the will of the commander. In the first case the advanced guard has done all that is required of it for the moment, and is merely called upon to retain possession of the ground which has been taken from the enemy. It is fairly certain that the enemy has just been driven from a position, which he has occupied defensively, by a heavy attack, in which every company in the advanced guard has, probably, been employed. The attack has been a somewhat rapid operation with a very strong firing line deployed from the first, and consequently it is likely that the companies have not been greatly mixed up. Some companies will now be withdrawn from the firing line to form local reserves, and other companies will be required to improve their fire position, either by moving a short distance to the front or rear, or by using their entrenching implements to form cover from the enemy's fire. In some cases, when the advanced guard has reached a

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position which is bad for defence, and when any further attack would involve it in a premature action against the enemy's main body, it will be necessary for a few companies to remain in the position gained acting as outpost companies, and for the remainder to be withdrawn to a better position for defence close in rear. It will be out of the question to improve any of the foreground which is exposed to the infantry and artillery fire of the enemy, but other parts may possibly be cleared. It will also be impracticable, as a rule, to make any elaborate fire trenches, efforts in this direction being limited to what the men can do with their entrenching implements when lying down. It is evident, therefore, that the exact fire position for the company to occupy must be chosen so as to make the most of the ground as it exists, and it may be very difficult to ensure a fairly straight and continuous line of defence. It is extremely undesirable in such circumstances to have any pronounced salient in the position, and it would be better to rely upon an indifferent fire position in rear and organize a very active defence with local counter-strokes. Fire positions are bad, as a rule, when, owing to the ground, it is easy for the enemy to advance, gain superiority of fire, assemble close to the defenders and deliver an assault. Exactly the same applies to the local counter-stroke delivered by the defenders, because the tables are turned; the enemy will have a bad fire position, and it will be easy for the counter-stroke to advance, gain superiority of fire and assault.

In fact, it is fairly certain that the troops who are properly trained in the spirit of offensive action will invariably win. It is the duty, therefore, for the company commander when he finds himself in a bad fire position on such an occasion to reconnoitre the ground in front with a view to the delivery of local counter-strokes.

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He should discover how far it is advisable for the sections who are delivering it to advance, what is the best fire position to make the "ground" object of the blow, whether covering fire can be provided from the main position, and the best manner of withdrawing the counter-stroke when it has completed its task.

A salient in the position is bad because, apart from the difficulty of defending it (*see* Chapter XV), the advanced guard commander will be anxious to occupy as wide a front as possible, and this will leave him very few reserves for local counter-strokes, whilst a salient invariably absorbs a larger number of men in the defence than when the general line is perfectly straight. If we draw a straight line from flank to flank of the position held by the advanced guard it will be much shorter than a line running round a salient; furthermore, the defence of the salient itself absorbs more men than the same extent of front in any other part of the position.

All ranks in the company must thoroughly understand that the safety of the main body, and probably success in the approaching battle, will depend upon the defence of the position now occupied. Men have been killed and wounded in securing the position, and this sacrifice will be useless if the enemy are allowed to retake it.

To sum up the requirements of the situation the company commander must first reorganize his company, and get his groups and sections under their proper commanders, he must then select and occupy the best fire position available, and if it is bad he must reconnoitre the ground with a view to establishing an adequate defence by means of local counter-strokes. The fire position must be improved by entrenchments so far as the enemy's fire will permit, and in some cases obstructions to view and fire in front of the position where they are not exposed to the enemy's fire can be demolished. He must arrange to obtain

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water for his men, because, after their previous exertions during the attack of the advanced guard, they will be badly in need of it. His company scouts must be very active in front, and on the flank if necessary, to give warning of any hostile movement and to discover if possible the exact position of the enemy and particularly whether he is entrenching or not. It is extraordinary how scouting is neglected on such occasions, and it may be possible for our patrols to get quite close to the enemy's position without being discovered, and to bring back information which may be of the utmost value not only to the advanced guard commander but to the General who is directing the whole of the operations.

The situation when an attack has succeeded, and the companies are required to make good the position which has been captured, is on the whole easier to deal with than the one which has just been discussed, because there are more troops available for the purpose, and these troops are even more elated and full of energy than in the last case. The first difficulty to overcome is the disorganized condition of the companies, who will be mixed up with other companies, belonging perhaps to different regiments. It appears to be out of the question to reorganize the companies until an efficient fire position is established on the enemy's side of the locality which has been carried by assault. There are several reasons for this; the enemy must be pursued immediately by fire to prevent him from reforming, any hostile counter-stroke which may be delivered must be repulsed without fail and assaulted by our leading companies, ground must be gained to the front so that our artillery can come up in safety, assist in the pursuit by fire and the repulse of a counter-stroke, and time must be gained to enable our attacking troops in rear to reform and prepare for further offensive operations, either to continue the attack or to press the pursuit.

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Company commanders should train their men to understand that the assault and capture of a position so far as the company is concerned is not limited to the main position held by the enemy. During the progress of the attack the enemy's outposts may be encountered, or he may be found defending some locality in advance of the main position, especially on the far side of any natural obstacle which has to be traversed by the attack. Each one of these localities must be carried by assault and made good directly the enemy is driven out of it. The locality may be under heavy fire from the enemy's main position in rear, or, if it is on the latter position, it may be subject to a counter-stroke as already suggested, or to the fire of a rear guard.

If we have no time available to reform our companies, the men must group themselves together under any non-commissioned officer they find with them, section commanders must assume control of several of these groups, and company commanders must take charge of three or four of these sections. When the companies of a whole battalion have reinforced the attack shortly before an assault, it may be possible for the battalion commander to get the men of his own regiment forward and leave the companies of other battalions to reorganize in rear. Whatever the circumstances may be, it is the duty of every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man in the front line to advance immediately the enemy is driven back and occupy a fire position securing the locality. Meanwhile commanders and staff officers will be busy in rear organizing battalions as rapidly as possible, so that the confused mass of troops in front can be relieved with the object of reforming them.

The chief difficulty will be to occupy a definite and continuous position without any gaps, and the only way to overcome this will be for every company commander to

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take three or four sections adjacent to each other under his control, whatever regiment they may belong to, and for the section commanders to obey his orders implicitly. If the men of every company are trained to band themselves together in small parties, and the group leaders join on to other groups right and left of them, a section commander will soon be found, and thus a company will be formed. If, on the other hand, the organization has to be initiated the reverse way, commencing with the company commanders and so on through the sections and groups to individual men, it is doubtful if any satisfactory results can be obtained.

This operation can only be practised with effect during battalion and brigade training, because a single company cannot reach the state of disorganization which would occur in war. It is necessary, however, as a preliminary step to train the men of different sections to work together under one group leader when the sections have got mixed up during an assault, and this can be practised during company training.

If there is no enemy in view when the position is first occupied, company, section, and group commanders may make more elaborate arrangements for reorganizing the men who are with them by putting those of one regiment together under officers and non-commissioned officers of their own corps. It will also be advisable to fix upon any existing aiming marks in front of the position, so that when a counter-stroke is delivered the direction and control of the fire will be more effective. If the whole of this reorganization can be carried out without any shouting on the part of officers and non-commissioned officers, it will show that it has originated, as it should do, with the men themselves. On some occasions the question of ammunition supply may be very urgent, and no doubt commanders and staff officers in rear will collect any ammunition pack-

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horses that may be available and send them forward to the front line.

The order of importance of these various operations is, first, to secure a good fire position commanding the approaches to the locality on the enemy's side, by pushing forward with the men who have just delivered the assault, who should be grouping and organizing themselves as they go; secondly, to establish a continuous line of defence; thirdly, to fix aiming marks and take ranges; fourthly, to get officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the same regiment together in groups, sections, or even companies.

The fifth type of defence, the occupation of a position by a rear guard or an outpost company, to cover the withdrawal of a force or to enable the main body in rear to get ready for battle, differs from the others in that the defence must necessarily be of a more passive nature, and must permit of successful withdrawal when the object has been accomplished. The defensive action of an outpost company after it has been forced to retire from its original position can be dealt with more conveniently in Chapter XX, on the subject of outposts, and it will be sufficient to discuss here the defensive action of a rear guard.

The object of the operation is to give the main body time to reorganize and retire in good order. The time taken in the first task will depend a good deal upon the moral of the troops at the moment; that in the second task upon various factors, such as the size of the main force, the number of roads available for the retreat, the position of the transport, the existence of an obstacle in rear which can easily be held for a considerable time against greatly superior numbers.

We are not concerned here with the conduct of a rear-guard action as a whole, but it may be said that modern weapons have greatly facilitated such an operation.

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especially in open country, for the simple reason that the pursuing enemy before assaulting the position occupied by the rear guard must either gain superiority of fire or else turn its flank, both of which operations absorb a good deal of time. In the old days in open country the enemy could get very close to the position before a shot could be fired, and it became extremely difficult for the rear guard to cause any serious delay without running risk of annihilation or capture.

The procedure adopted by the rear guard is very simple. The companies are deployed on a wide front with very few supports and no reserves. When one locality can no longer be defended, and the enemy has been delayed by being compelled to deploy and gain superiority of fire, or else to work round the flank, one part of the rear guard retires and occupies another position in rear whence it can cover the retirement of the other part. Whether the right would retire first, followed later by the left flank or vice versa, or whether both flanks would retire leaving the centre, are matters which will be ruled by the comparative pressure of the attack against different parts of the rear guard and by the nature of the ground.

From the point of view of a company which is forming part of a rear guard the first matter to decide is the exact site of the fire position. In addition to the usual but conflicting requirements of a good field of fire and cover for the defenders, the fire position should permit of easy withdrawal; that is to say, that when the company falls back it can gain cover in rear before the locality which has just been evacuated can be occupied by the enemy. This latter condition renders some fire positions, which would be suitable in other situations, highly inconvenient in the existing circumstances. For example, the foot of a slope in open country with a bare hillside behind, though affording an excellent field of fire and

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good cover to the defenders would not be selected on account of the difficulty and loss attendant on a withdrawal over the hill. In such a case the top of the hill, even when there is dead ground immediately in front of the position, would be far more suitable, and this gives us a good general principle to work on. The defending company wishes to delay the enemy during his advance, bring him to a standstill as far from the position as possible, and compel him to obtain superiority of fire before getting any closer. There is no intention to stand an assault and therefore dead ground immediately in front of the fire position is immaterial, because the defenders will have gone before the enemy can reach that dead ground. Our object is, therefore, to choose a fire position which commands all ground from about two hundred to eight hundred yards in front of the locality we are defending. When the country is very open it is easy to arrange this, but in such country it is also easy for the enemy's cavalry to manœuvre round our flanks, which shows us that it is of great importance for the rear guard to be composed of sufficient mounted troops to obviate such an unpleasant experience.

The selection of fire positions in open country does not appear, therefore, to be a very difficult matter, and we can now consider more enclosed country where the view is everywhere restricted. There is a popular idea that close country is very good for defence and very bad for the attack, and that it is eminently suited for delaying operations such as that required from a rear guard. There is some truth in this, but by no means so much as many people appear to imagine; in fact, as regards definite attack and defence the advantage appears to lie as usual with the former. The defenders must be strong everywhere, because in close country one part of a position is rarely much stronger than another; the attack, on the

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other hand, can concentrate greatly superior force against part of the line of defence without much fear that the enemy will issue out and attack from the other part. In close country parts of a defensive position are bound to be very weak, and if the whole of the attack presses forward in the most vigorous manner some companies will strike these weak spots and should be able to penetrate the position. It is extremely difficult to organize an effective defence, the artillery can give little support to the infantry and must frequently occupy exposed positions where they can be seen by the attacking artillery who themselves can remain concealed. There is always an uneasy feeling amongst the defenders, which does not exist in the attack, that the flanks have been turned and that the line of retreat is in danger.

As regards delaying action close country is more suitable, because the attacking troops, to get forward, must use the roads, with the result that they are constantly deploying, attacking, forming column of route and deploying again. Even in this case the pursuing force has considerable compensating advantages, their main effort can be made along one road whilst the rear guard may have to defend several; it will be difficult for the rear guard to organize their resistance on two or more roads, and part of the force may be cut off. Human nature, however, appears to be on the side of the rear guard so far as the pursuit is concerned, and it is difficult to find an example of any pursuit which has been pressed through enclosed country. In fact, modern weapons appear to have paralysed pursuit altogether. There is no army in the world that is imbued with the offensive spirit more than the Japanese, and yet the Russian rear guards were easily able to cover the retreat of their main body after a retreat.

The selection of fire positions for a rear guard in close

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country is dependent far more upon the field of fire available than on commanding ground, or indeed upon any hills or undulations. In fact, a fire position facing up hill could be occupied just as effectively as one facing down hill or on the level. The main factor in the situation is a covered line of retreat so that the last companies can slip away before the enemy actually assaults the position. The strongest defence will, naturally, be offered right and left of the roads, and if the enemy are pressing too hard a counter-stroke against his flank in such country would be perfectly safe and might cause a very useful diversion.

The company commander when in occupation of one position should send back a well-trained non-commissioned officer to ascertain the general line of defence in the next position in rear, and to reconnoitre suitable fire positions; by this means the company commander will be able to take up his new position without any delay.

There is little to say as regards the withdrawal of the company from one position to another. The chief matter is for the company scouts to remain out on both flanks and let the commander know when the companies right and left of him have commenced to retire. The decision as to whether one company should retire before another would rest with the officer in local command of the companies, but in the absence of orders a company that is defending the only locality where the line of retreat is visible would stay there till all other companies had retired. Similarly, a company which is holding a locality which commands part of the rest of the line of defence would be the last to retire.

The actual withdrawal should be made in fighting formation, one section covered if necessary by the fire of the other. The retirement from one position to another should be rapid. so as to increase the distance between

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the rear guard and the pursuing enemy, and also because the retiring troops can create more delay by gaining the next position as soon as possible and having leisure to occupy it carefully than by attempting a running fight through close country. It is also possible that the retiring companies may mask the fire from the next position in rear. The great skill which used to be necessary in selecting the exact moment when to retire is not required so much with modern weapons, because with a satisfactory field of fire the enemy is stopped by the defence when still a considerable distance from the position. In close country, however, where the enemy can get within two or three hundred yards of the position before being exposed to fire, the time when it is desirable to go must be carefully watched. In peace manœuvres the old-time skill is necessary, because the pursuing enemy advance with such disregard of the fire from the rear guard that no position can be held by the latter for more than a few minutes.

The supply of ammunition will require attention from the company commander, because he will expend a great deal in each position, and the battalion reserve may have followed in the wake of the main body. A company that retires first from any position and consequently arrives first in the next may be able to do something towards improving the field of fire, and will usually be directed by the rear guard commander to occupy the most important locality which has to be defended until every other company has retired. The officer commanding this company would have time not only to select the best of several alternative fire positions but could also do something towards reconnoitring his line of retreat and deciding upon his course of action when he is left alone on the position. The section commanders will also be busy fixing aiming marks, and arranging for the dis-

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tribution of fire over the ground which the enemy will shortly be traversing.

If the officer commanding this company during his retreat from the last position discovers any obstacle between the two positions, he should send back word to the captain who will be the last to retire, because if pressed by the enemy this obstacle will be useful to him when withdrawing. In every class of operation a company commander should be thinking constantly how he can help other companies either by the distribution and direction of his fire, by a vigorous advance or a protracted defence, by information as regards the enemy or the ground, and by filling up gaps where they occur in an attack.

When considering defence by night it is necessary, as a rule, that the dispositions should accord with those by day. The first essential point to remember is that directly it becomes dark fire trenches can be constructed or improved, but no reconnaissance can be made for new sites. We have already discussed (*see* page 333) the question of defence by night as regards the construction of obstacles, and it has been suggested that those parts of the position which are the strongest for defence by day, and require the fewest troops to keep the enemy at bay, are the most subject to attack by night; for the good reason that ground which affords the best field of fire must be fairly level, with no obstructions to view or fire, and consequently is easy to traverse by night when no longer swept by the bullets of the defence. Of course there are exceptions to this rule, because there may be some natural obstacle in front of part of a position such as a vineyard, a wide river or a morass, which would be equally impassable by day or by night; although in the case of a river a night attack is still possible.

There is no doubt that an obstacle is very useful to

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delay or break up an attack, especially when its locality is unknown to the enemy and when it is provided with a garrison close in rear to prevent its destruction. The best method, however, of dealing with night attacks when on the defensive is to place outposts, protected by artificial obstacles, in front of the position, and if the outpost troops are compelled to withdraw the direction of the enemy's advance will be discovered and a night attack can be made upon him.

The success of night attacks hinges so much on the absence of hostile patrols, outposts and obstacles, that if these essentials for defence at night are provided, the rest of the force should be able to sleep undisturbed in their trenches. As regards obstacles, it appears to be useless to construct them for night work where they can be located by the enemy by day, because we find in the Manchurian campaign that the Japanese were forced to make night attacks because they could not destroy and traverse the Russian obstacles in daylight.

We must be prepared therefore to be able to construct obstacles in darkness, and this requires some training to ensure that the work can be carried out efficiently and in perfect silence. It is easy to provide this training because obstacles are constantly required in front of an outpost company, and these can be made at night during company training.

In all night fighting the most important weapon possessed by any arm is the bayonet of the infantry soldier. In the defence, therefore, as in the attack, the whole scheme of night operations and the whole training in peace should be based on the bayonet. The bayonet cannot be used effectively from behind entrenchments, its great power is when in the hands of highly trained men who are prepared to charge, without firing a shot, directly the position of the enemy has been located. A hundred

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years ago, when the fire effect of the musket was very limited, great importance was attached to the bayonet, but in modern fighting by day, where the first step towards victory, the establishment of superiority of fire, is decided when the combatants are from two to six hundred yards apart, the final but necessary culmination of the fight is apt to be lost sight of.

In the old days the British soldier went into a fight knowing that he would have to use his bayonet if he was going to gain a victory, and yet his training in the use of that weapon was limited to an exercise far more suited to the stage of a modern music-hall than to the stern realities of a battlefield. To-day a soldier enters a fight with very little idea of ever using his bayonet, yet his training in that weapon is carried out patiently day after day in the most practical and scientific manner. The weapon is there, and the training is there; it appears that the only thing wanted is the spark to explode the cartridge, the plan of action based on the bayonet, which will send our men to victory on the darkest night.

It may be risky—every danger at night appears to be exaggerated, but that is human nature which we have set out to overcome. If the enemy can attack at night there appears to be no reason why we should not do the same when we are temporarily acting on the defensive. We have seen in Chapter VI that every soldier should be taught that his ordinary duty is to attack, and that when for some reason he is called upon for a short time to defend the offensive spirit must still remain, and that he cannot call himself a well-trained fighter unless at any moment he is prepared to change from the defence to the attack.

From these considerations it appears that when acting on the defensive at night the front of the whole position must be watched by sentries and patrols, that the most

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probable avenues of approach should be obstructed by obstacles, with outposts close behind them ready to delay or prevent their demolition by opening fire on the enemy who advance against them; that once the enemy is located companies should be detailed to attack him with the bayonet; that such action is almost certain to meet with success and the fire trenches on the main position will rarely be assaulted. From this we see that by far the most important part of the defence by night is an attack or counter-stroke. If we can once get this principle fixed in our minds and really believe that it is true, and are ready to apply it in front of the enemy in war, we shall have little to fear from any hostile operations by night, even if we are engaged in the "passive" defence of a position, which we will hope is practically an operation of the past.

It is unnecessary here to consider the steps which must be taken to ensure an accurate fire on any obstacle placed in front of a fire trench at night, because the subject will be dealt with in Chapter XIX. It is only necessary to say that whatever mechanical appliances are used for directing the fire their value should, when possible, be tested beforehand, because what looks satisfactory in daylight may not be very effective at night. It must also be remembered that, when any night attack with the bayonet is sent forward in the shape of a counter-stroke from the main position, the exact position of the obstacle must be noted and the defenders behind it must on no account be permitted to fire, though they are free at all times to use a much more powerful weapon for defence, namely, the bayonet. An enemy who knows that when embarking upon a night attack he must first encounter hostile sentries and patrols, then run into obstacles defended by fire from close in rear, and finally, when he has given away his position, he will be subject to a sudden attack with the bayonet. may ask

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himself whether the game is worth the candle. The defenders know the ground in great detail, the attack know little about it. The defenders can fix the most probable avenues of approach and their scouts can lead them to the attacking enemy directly he is located, the obstacles prepared for the enemy can be carefully avoided, and the only thing that may possibly be lacking is the offensive spirit when on the defensive, which must exist before we can initiate and carry out the enterprise.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE OUTPOST COMPANY

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF OUTPOSTS

THE establishment of an outpost position to protect a force when halted depends for efficiency almost entirely upon the arrangements made by company and section commanders, and upon the knowledge possessed by non-commissioned officers and men regarding the various duties they are called upon to perform. We require first-class scouting, the greatest vigilance on the part of the sentries, and stubborn resistance from the remainder of the outpost company when attacked by superior numbers. It is evident that the physical features of the country will exercise a dominating influence upon every outpost problem which is presented to us, from the selection of the general line of the outpost position, which is decided by some higher authority than the company commander, down to the choice of a position for a sentry. The ground, in fact, has a greater effect upon the details of outpost work than upon the attack or defence, because in the two last, areas of ground which are quite unsuitable are avoided, whereas every conceivable type of country may be included in an outpost position.

Although the selection of the general line of the outpost position will rest with the officer commanding the force to be protected, it is desirable for all ranks in the company to understand the principles upon which this

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selection is based, because once the troops are in position each individual outpost company is responsible for a definite portion of the front occupied, and must act in such a manner that co-operation with other outpost companies may be assured. Failure on the part of one outpost company will cause the breakdown of the whole line, and may endanger the safety of the main body in rear. In a position which is occupied for defence the ground is held in a more or less continuous line, with local and general reserves available and ready to maintain the fight in any part of the field of battle. With an outpost position it is impossible to do this in most cases, because so many men would have to be employed that the army would not get sufficient rest. The chief exception will be when the force is closely engaged with the enemy and is compelled to bivouac in the position it has gained during the day.

The Regulations lay down that when a force is halted it must be covered by protective troops, so we should consider first the most important of the various situations in which a force is placed when it halts; and these may be divided under four headings:

(1) A force halted in billets or bivouacs, when the transport is sent up to the troops, and when men and horses are to be rested and fed.

(2) A force temporarily halted within possible striking distance of the enemy and with the troops assembled in one locality.

(3) A force which has been closely engaged with the enemy during daylight, neither side having gained a marked advantage over the other, and when the troops are required to occupy during the night the position they have gained or held during the day.

(4) A force halted in column of route on a road.

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No doubt there are other situations, but the above are the most important, and if we consider the action which must be taken to ensure protection in these cases, it will be easy to apply common-sense modifications to suit other and more exceptional examples.

It has been a common error in the past, both during peace training and in war, to base the whole of the arrangements of an outpost position upon the locality occupied by the troops in bivouac, instead of upon the position they must occupy before they are ready to commence an engagement with the enemy. A crude example of this, which has repeatedly occurred in war, is when the troops have occupied billets or bivouacs, and the outposts have occupied the ground in the vicinity, which those troops must reach before they will be ready to commence a fight. The enemy has then attacked, and the outposts have not been able to delay him long enough to enable the troops in bivouac to reach the only fighting position available. It appears, therefore, that the first principle of outposts is to prevent the enemy from gaining a footing upon the best fighting position available near the bivouac before it can be occupied by the troops from the bivouac, and not to prevent the enemy from reaching the bivouac, because the first includes the second. If the first is neglected the chief object of outposts, namely, to enable the main body to get ready for fighting, is likely to be defeated.

The officer who is selecting a position for outposts will consider four things: first the fighting position of the main body; secondly, the position of the bivouacs or billets; thirdly, the time it will take for the troops to turn out of their billets or bivouacs and reach the fighting position; and, fourthly, the best general line which can be held so as to prevent the enemy from reaching the fighting position before the main body can occupy it. It is not

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always necessary that this fighting position should be suitable for a defensive battle; in fact, it would only be used defensively if the scheme of operations for the troops in bivouac was for the moment of that nature. The officer commanding the force when deciding upon the fighting position will, no doubt, realize that if the troops turn out of their bivouacs and are immediately called upon to fight, they will not, in nine cases out of ten, be suitably placed for the purpose. He will then study the ground in front and discover that if the troops can reach a certain line they will be well placed either for attack or defence; in fact he will go further and decide upon the best arrangements for an attack if the enemy advances from two or more possible but alternative directions. If on the other hand his orders, or the general situation, demand a temporary defensive attitude, he will decide upon the details of the occupation of the fighting position for defence.

In some cases, when there is no doubt that the main body can occupy the fighting position before the outposts can be driven away from it, it may be sufficient to place the outposts on or very close in front of the fighting position. This might be the case when there is an obstacle in front of the fighting position like a river, or a thick wood, or very enclosed country, which it would take the enemy a long time to traverse, especially at night, or when the bivouac is very close to the fighting position, or when the outposts are unusually strong, owing to the nature of the ground or the numbers employed. In other cases it will be necessary to select a position for the outposts considerably in advance of the fighting position, either because such a line would be easier to hold, owing to certain junctions of roads or avenues of approach, or to an obstacle like a stream running along the front, or because the bivouac is a long way in rear of the fighting

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position, and the enemy, if he succeeds in driving back the outposts, must have a long way to go before reaching it.

As a result of the above considerations an outpost company may find itself three or four miles from the bivouac of the main body, and perhaps one or two in front of the fighting position. This, however, would rarely be the case with a small force, because such extension of the distance between the bivouac and the outposts will cause a prohibitive increase in the number of men required for the latter. One mile of front will require, approximately, the same number of men on outpost duty as another mile, and if we draw a semicircle with a radius of one mile we shall have a front of about three miles, whilst a semicircle with a radius of two miles would produce a front of six miles. Double the number of men will be required to produce an equal amount of resistance in the second case than in the first.

It is very important that all ranks in the company should understand these simple principles, because upon them will depend, to a great extent, the amount of resistance to be offered by each outpost company. For example, we will suppose that the bivouac is some distance from the fighting position, and that a river, which it would take the enemy a long time to cross, especially by night, runs close along the front of part of the position and then bends away towards the enemy. Outpost companies would be placed to defend the bridges over this river, and they would be required to offer a most prolonged resistance, which would be quite possible with their flanks secured by the river. The remainder of the front of the fighting position, especially in open country, might be occupied by outpost companies placed a long way in advance. The resistance of these companies cannot be very prolonged against an attack by superior numbers, but the enemy will be greatly delayed in his further

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advance towards the fighting position by the action of the retiring outpost companies, who will dispute every inch of ground and act very much like a rear guard until the fighting position is reached. The companies will then defend the fighting position until the last, because if that is lost before the main body arrives the whole force will be placed at a great disadvantage, and may be compelled to retire with the loss of some of their transport and without fighting.

A commander will select, naturally, a position for his bivouac or his billets as close to a suitable fighting position as possible, so that the time taken by the main body in turning out and occupying the position in fighting formation, either by day or by night, for attack or for defence, may be reduced to a minimum. This will automatically reduce the number of men required for outpost duty, because the outpost companies will not be required to be placed so far away, and consequently the front to be occupied will be smaller.

With a very large force like two or more divisions bivouacked or billeted over a wide extent of front, the number of men employed on outpost duty is not greatly increased, except on the flanks, by extending the distance between the bivouacs and the outpost position. For example, if we draw two parallel lines seven miles long and a mile apart, representing two alternative outpost positions in front of a fighting position for the main body, and turn back the flanks, so that each line will look like half an oval which has been bisected lengthways, the number of men required to occupy the straight part of the line will be approximately the same in each case, and very few more companies will be required for the increased extension of the flanks of the advanced outpost position.

The next principle for the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men to understand is that absolute reliance

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is placed upon each outpost company to prevent the enemy from penetrating that part of the front allotted to it before the main body has had time to occupy its fighting position. This means that if the company is placed very close in front of the fighting position, or actually on it, the resistance must last until the main body arrives. If the company is some distance in front of the fighting position the necessary delay can be ensured, first, by resistance in the locality defended by the outpost company, and, secondly, when this is no longer possible, by delaying the enemy during the retreat of the company towards the fighting position, and, finally, the fighting position must be held at all costs.

It has been said, with considerable truth, that disasters have occurred in war by the piquets being driven back, or retiring, without offering sufficient resistance, and, arguing from this, it has been urged that the piquet should never retire, but maintain its position until it is surrounded and forced to surrender, or until the locality is carried by assault. This idea does not appear to be borne out in any way by the Regulations, which clearly lay down that the outposts are required to delay the enemy's advance by resistance, and that piquet commanders in every case are to be told the degree of resistance to be offered. It is evident, therefore, that the outpost company as a whole is not intended to resist to the last, but to delay the enemy as long as possible in the first instance, and to continue to delay him during his subsequent advance until the fighting position of the main body is reached. If the outpost company is to wait so long that it gets surrounded, or has to face a bayonet assault, its delaying power will be limited to the resistance it can offer in its first position. The delay so gained will depend a great deal upon the vulnerability

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of the flanks of the company, which again will depend upon the nature of the country.

If the outpost company is defending an obstacle like a river, or is guarding an approach in very enclosed country, its flanks will be difficult to assail without considerable delay. If, on the other hand, the country is very open, the first object of the enemy, after ascertaining the dispositions of the outpost company, will be to avoid delay, and attack the company in flank, or at least make an enveloping attack. Occasions must arise, therefore, where the delay created by the action of the outpost company in its original position is not sufficient to enable the main body to occupy the fighting position, and where it is necessary to cause further delay by resisting the enemy at every possible locality during the retreat of the company towards the fighting position of the main body. It is probable that by day in very open country, where the ground is, or should be, very well known to the outpost company commander, but not to the enemy, the resistance offered by a well-led company during its retreat will cause more delay than that which it is possible to offer in the original outpost position. The Regulations, therefore, appear to meet the requirements of the case fully by emphasizing the relation between delay and resistance, and by making no mention of such a stubborn and prolonged defence which is bound eventually to be broken down and which will cause a gap in the outpost line through which the enemy can pass without any further opposition, so far as those outposts are concerned.

It appears, therefore, that we shall not be infringing either the spirit or the letter of the Regulations if we divide our resistance, and hence our delaying powers, into two parts, one the resistance we can offer in the original position occupied by the outpost company, and the other

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during the retreat of the company towards the fighting position which is to be held by our main body. The great difficulty is to standardize the resistance so that every company in the outpost position will act in a similar manner. The criterion for retreat is easy to settle; the company must resist until any further occupation of the locality will mean that it will be cut off or will be subject to a successful bayonet assault by the enemy. The difficulty is to know when this state of affairs has actually arisen. If our company retires too soon its delaying action will be reduced, if it waits too long a dangerous gap will be formed in the outpost line and the company will be unable to create any further delay. Human nature is on the side of going too soon, so our company is more likely to commit the first mistake than the second; if, however, we make our arrangements for a prolonged defence, carefully study the ground over which the enemy can advance, and ascertain that we can maintain our position until he actually occupies certain localities on our flanks, or near our line of retreat, we shall gain some data upon which to base our decision. It is fairly easy to do this by day, when we can see the movements of the enemy, and to some extent his strength, but at night it is more difficult. At night, however, it is more difficult for the enemy to advance with superior numbers and attack us, especially if he is unaware of the exact position of our piquet. It appears, however, that the same principle that was suggested for day can be applied to night operations, and if when the enemy attacks we post a few men on our flanks in the localities which, when occupied by the enemy, will render further resistance useless, we shall obtain a guide as to the delay which it is possible to produce.

The method, which has been adopted on some occasions, of occupying a very wide front with the outpost

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company, and thus increasing the enemy's difficulties in reaching the flanks, has serious disadvantages as regards control of the fight, and also as regards frontal resistance, because the defence is weak everywhere, and one part of the company may be driven back, and the retreat of the whole may be not only hastened but possibly prevented altogether. As, however, we are dealing at present with general principles it will be better to discuss the possible extent of front which can be occupied by an outpost company when we are considering the details of outpost work.

It is clear that the commander of the outpost company must be informed, as laid down in the Regulations, of the amount of delay which it is necessary to create before the enemy can reach the fighting position which is to be occupied by the main body. He will then be in a position to decide how much resistance can be offered in the original position which is occupied aad how much during the retreat of the outpost company, taking care to be on the safe side as regards sufficient resistance and using every effort to ensure that the greatest possible resistance and consequently the longest delay will be produced in the original position occupied by the company.

Although the general dispositions and system of command of the whole outpost line are decided by higher commanders it is important that the outpost company should understand the principles upon which the operations are conducted, because they vary greatly from the methods adopted in attack and defence, and depend for success upon the action of each individual outpost company and its commander far more than upon any higher leading or control. If we take as an example a situation where the outpost companies on fairly open ground are each watching and guarding a front of about half a mile four

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companies will be occupying a front of two miles. Assuming that this is one section of the outpost position it will be under one commander, and if he can fly about on an aeroplane it is possible that he may be able to influence the course of events when the enemy attacks in strength, but if, as is usually the case, he is riding a tired horse he will be able to do little more than influence the action of one of the outpost companies, because he will not be able to get from one company to another with sufficient rapidity to deal with the constantly changing situation in front of each. It is for this reason that the Regulations emphasize the importance of outpost companies affording mutual support to each other so that they will be able to act in co-operation in the probable absence of any higher leading.

The officer commanding the section of the outposts will, no doubt, carefully reconnoitre the whole of the ground between his outpost position and the fighting position to be occupied by the main body. He will arrange lines of retreat for each outpost company, he will indicate the localities where further resistance is possible, and he will point out to one outpost company commander how he can support another, either by a more prolonged resistance in one place, or by holding some locality until the outpost company on his flank has reached some other locality. The officer commanding the section will, however, be unaware of the exact direction of the enemy's advance, he may not know whether one of his outpost companies is more likely to be attacked heavily than another, and therefore, with the best intentions and the most careful reconnaissance, it will be impracticable and probably confusing and undesirable for him to attempt to lay down any exact instructions regarding the action of each outpost company.

The great point for each outpost company to aim at is

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to offer serious resistance itself and at the same time do everything possible to assist the delaying action of the companies on its flanks, both during the occupation of the original position and throughout the retirement towards the fighting position which is to be occupied by the main body. The first of these requirements is simple and will, no doubt, be included in the instructions of the officer commanding the section of the outposts; the second, however, is not easy to ensure, because the situation which may arise cannot always be foreseen. It is desirable therefore for each outpost company commander to confer with the commander of the company on his flank and decide at least a few points, such as what one will do if the other is driven back first, if both are driven back, or if neither is heavily attacked but the companies on one flank are compelled to retire. In the last case two outpost company commanders might arrange for the work of one company to be taken over by half the other company, thus releasing a whole company to assist the company which is in difficulties on the flank. It is doubtful whether the action of the outpost companies after they have been forced back from their original position is given the attention it deserves during peace training, especially considering the difficult nature of such an operation, and the necessary absence of really effective control by one commander.

The necessity for constant communication between companies on outpost duty is clearly indicated in th Regulations but is not always established either in war or during peace training. When the enemy is close at hand the outposts are frequently disturbed during the night and a good deal of firing may be heard; this does not mean necessarily that an outpost company on the flank of our company has been compelled to retire. It is essential, however, that we should immediately ascertain

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the situation in front of the flank company because a report of any success by a flank company will encourage our own men to do as well, and if by chance the flank company has been driven back it may be possible to retrieve the situation, whilst in any case our company will not be left by itself totally ignorant of the situation, with the enemy advancing past its flank towards the fighting position of our main body.

It is usual to divide the subject of outposts into operations by day and by night, the latter, of course, being far more difficult to conduct than the former. During daylight the men composing the main body are all awake, and they can assemble rapidly and advance quickly to the fighting position. The outposts can see a long way to the front, using the sentries or the patrols as eyes, and can thus gain early warning of any hostile advance; they can make full use of their long-range quick-firing rifle, and delay the enemy before he approaches sufficiently close to the outpost position to make further resistance undesirable. The subsequent retreat to the fighting position can be conducted on comprehensive lines, ensuring close co-operation between the various outpost companies, and when necessary or desirable can be assisted by artillery fire either from the fighting position or some locality in advance of it. During the hours of darkness the field of fire is short, the issue rests greatly with the bayonet, and the enemy can approach very close to the piquet before serious measures can be taken to stop him.

Before considering the general principles which must be applied in each particular case, it is desirable to study the possibilities of resistance by the outpost company at night as compared with the possibilities of the attack. We shall thus be in a position to make the most of the advantages possessed by the outpost company, and do our best to overcome the disadvantages. The general air of

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mystery and nervousness which envelops all night operations should be more likely to disturb the equanimity of the attackers than of the outpost company, because the former have been unable to study the ground very closely, they may be unaware of the exact position of the company, and should be ignorant of the details of the defence, especially as regards the position of obstacles and the extent of front occupied by the company—that is to say, whether they have run against a small piquet or the whole of an outpost company. The latter, on the other hand, will in most cases have been able to reconnoitre the ground in daylight, the probable or at least the easiest line of approach for the enemy will have been ascertained, and the most careful arrangements will have been made to increase the difficulties of his advance and subsequent attack.

The attackers, on the other hand, can select their own line of advance, which may lead in a direction where no defence is prepared by the outpost company, and the line of resistance may be penetrated without a blow being struck to prevent it. It may appear to the ordinary individual, who has had no training for war, that it is just as easy to march a couple of battalions between two hostile outpost companies at night as it is for him to cross a few fields to post a letter. If, however, he is aware that a tiger has recently escaped from a menagerie in the neighbourhood and is still at large it is probable that the letter will not be posted. The presence of the outpost companies on the flanks and rear will produce somewhat similar feelings in the minds of the men of those two battalions as the possible society of the tiger will produce on the peaceful gentleman who is going to post his letter.

Even if two battalions succeeded in getting through an extended outpost line and reached the fighting position in

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safety, it is doubtful if they could do very much when they got there unless they were followed up by a larger force. Nobody will undertake advances and attacks unless, firstly, the object cannot be gained by day without great loss of life; and, secondly, unless that object is definite and local. All authorities agree and all experience of war teaches that it is too risky to undertake night advances and night attacks by large forces with the object of defeating and driving back the enemy. If large forces are not employed, the front of the advancing lines or columns will be comparatively small, and the flanks in consequence will be somewhat vulnerable. And this brings us to a very important conclusion—namely, that an outpost position is not likely to be attacked in strength at night along the whole extent of its front. If this is the case, it is necessary to consider how far the outpost companies who are not being attacked can assist those who may be compelled to retire. If we are prepared to abandon the remainder of the outpost position because one or two outpost companies have been driven back, the companies immediately on the flanks of the part which has been penetrated should be able to do something to delay the advancing enemy or perhaps draw him away from his true objective until the fighting position has been occupied by our main body. The sudden appearance of a hostile force on his flank or rear might easily create a panic, and is almost certain to stop his further advance. Is it practicable, however, for outpost companies to wander about on a dark night seeking for an enemy who has penetrated the outpost line, and whose exact position is not known, with the chance of mistaking the identity of another outpost company engaged in a similar operation? If this is considered to be out of the question, are the outpost companies on the flanks to maintain their original position or should they commence to withdraw towards the fighting

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position? It is quite evident that the outposts have been penetrated, and it may be assumed that the enemy is endeavouring to establish himself in a position whence he can command the bivouac as soon as it is daylight, and that he will be followed by much larger forces. It appears, therefore, that the outpost companies that have not been attacked are required on the fighting position more than in front of it, because they can at least retain possession of some part of it until the main body arrives, and by closing in towards the companies that have been driven back, they will increase the resistance which can be offered to the enemy who is endeavouring to establish himself on it.

This last appears to be the most practicable solution to a very difficult problem, because it is the easiest to arrange beforehand, and some certainty will exist that the arrangements can be carried out without serious risk of disaster. The officer commanding the section of the outpost position which is attacked will have ascertained the most important locality in that portion of the fighting position which he is covering, and will direct all his outpost companies, if one or more are driven back, to withdraw to this locality, which must be defended at all costs uutil the main body arrives. The officer commanding each outpost company will reconnoitre the line of retreat to this locality with the double object of discovering his best course of action if his own company is attacked and driven back, or if a company on his flank is compelled to retire. The actual details of such an operation, so far as the company is concerned, will be dealt with later, when considering the withdrawal of an outpost company (*see* p. 406).

The amount of resistance that is likely to be offered by an outpost company at night, before it is compelled to commence its retreat, will depend partly upon the

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nature of the country in the immediate neighbourhood, and partly upon the dispositions made by the company commander. When an outpost company is defending an approach which traverses an obstacle like a river, or which passes through very enclosed country it appears that the usual distribution of sentries, piquets and supports is not always necessary. The enemy can only advance in one direction, and every rifle that can be spared and every obstacle that can be made should be available to stop or at least greatly delay his progress.

The defence of such a locality is easy, sentries should be placed well to the front with a small obstacle fifteen or twenty yards in front of them, they will give the alarm by firing and will hold their ground until they ascertain that the enemy is actually penetrating the obstacle, when they will retire by a prearranged track clear of the flanks of the outpost company in rear, so as not to mask the fire of the company. In enclosed country it is easy to arrange this line of retreat, but in the case of a bridge over an unfordable river, there is no means of retirement except over that bridge. It is also highly desirable to place obstacles across the bridge, so that it is difficult to see how any sentries can be posted on the far side, unless the whole defence of the outpost company is arranged on that bank. This is not a satisfactory solution, because if we draw a sketch of a bridge over a river and place a semicircle, representing the outpost company, with the centre towards the river, at each end of the bridge, we see that when the company is placed on the enemy's side of the bridge, the fire from the company is divergent, whereas on the near side it is essentially concentrated. Furthermore, the men are likely to offer a more stubborn resistance in the comparative security of the position behind the bridge as compared with the position on the enemy's side of the

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river. On the other hand it will be very difficult to send forward patrols, because the bridge will be covered with obstacles.

The question naturally arises as to whether it is necessary, in such a case, for the sentries to be placed on the far side, why should they not be posted in the position occupied by the company, as is done sometimes in savage warfare? This, however, appears to be an unsatisfactory solution, because the enemy's scouts can approach the far end of the bridge undisturbed, and unobserved, and the whole company will be kept on the alert all night, because there will be no warning of any attempt to rush the bridge; it is, however, better than the alternative plan of placing the sentries on the far side of the bridge and allowing them to retire over the obstacles placed on the bridge, and thus masking the fire of the company. Perhaps the best solution of all would be to place a piquet well beyond the bridge on the enemy's side, with obstacles in front of it and further obstacles between the piquet and the bridge and on the bridge itself. The piquet would be able to discriminate between the advance of a hostile patrol and that of a larger force, it would be able to delay the latter and would retire by a carefully arranged track clear of the obstacles, making up the gaps left in the obstacles actually on the bridge, and reaching the outpost company before the enemy can get near enough for the latter to open fire.

By this means patrols have free access to the far side of the river, the outpost company as a whole will not be disturbed by every hostile scout that approaches, and the presence of a superior force of the enemy on the far bank is certain to be discovered. It may be laid down as a general principle that every outpost company commander should keep himself informed throughout

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the night as to the presence or absence of any hostile force of considerable size within at least a mile of his position. He will then be in a position to co-operate more effectually with the outpost companies on his flanks, if they are heavily attacked. On many occasions the position of the company would be decided by the nature of the ground near the bridge, the presence of buildings, trees, bushes, banks, &c., which would facilitate or hinder the effective defence of the locality on one bank or the other. The chief object of introducing this example of the defence of a bridge by an outpost company is to show how many difficulties arise even when the situation is exceptionally favourable; in fact, with the greatest care and the most skilful use of ground it is the exception rather than the rule for any outpost company to find itself in a position where it could delay an attack at night for any lengthy period, provided that the attack is pressed home with the bayonet, and that the enemy is sufficiently bold to envelop the flanks of the outpost company. These two provisions are, in fact, the chief saving clauses in the situation, which will easily be realized if we take a simple example.

We will suppose that an outpost company has placed sentries to the front, with small piquets in rear, and with the remainder of the company occupying the best position available in some central place behind the piquets, and suppose that the enemy attacks in strength. Our patrols will first discover the enemy's advance, our sentries will be disturbed by hostile scouts, and sooner or later must fall back clear of the piquet in rear. The enemy's scouts will endeavour to locate the exact position of the piquet, and the latter will be rushed with the bayonet. The enemy will then endeavour to discover the position and, above all, the flanks of the remainder of the outpost company, and will follow the same

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procedure as before. It is quite evident that the enemy have not got an easy task in front of them, and our efforts should be directed towards increasing their difficulties by the construction of obstacles and by arranging for a very heavy fire to be brought to bear on the most probable lines of approach.

There is no problem in minor tactics that is more difficult to deal with and affording more numerous possible solutions than the establishment of an outpost company by night. It is easy to criticize adversely any plan adopted by the company commander, and it is frequently possible to suggest another which may be as good, and of course according to the critics' view a great deal better, but in such a case, if the company and its commander believe their plan is the best, they will offer a more stubborn resistance than if it is changed by some higher commander. Having reconnoitred the ground, the company commander should work out what the enemy is most likely to do, and endeavour to checkmate him at each stage in the proceedings. First, the best manner of dealing with hostile scouts by ambuscades, &c.; secondly, the action of the sentries, and their line of retreat so as not to mask the fire of the piquet; thirdly, the enemy's attack on the piquet, endeavours being made to draw him into a bayonet charge against an obstacle which is under fire from the piquet; fourthly, the retreat of the piquet, when its flanks are turned, so that it does not mask the fire of the remainder of the outpost company, the final attack upon the company which we hope will be delivered against an obstacle which we have placed to receive it.

It is undesirable to suggest any definite system for arranging the defence of an outpost company, because everything will depend upon whether the country in front of the outpost position is open or enclosed, and also upon the ground in the immediate vicinity of the company

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itself. There are, however, three systems which can be applied on most occasions and, consequently, are worthy of careful study.

First, we have the ordinary method of placing sentries in front, with piquets guarding the most important approaches, and with a support in rear to reinforce any one or all of those piquets if they are heavily attacked, the piquets being the main line of resistance.

Secondly, there is a similar system with sentries and piquets and a strong support in rear which is not intended to reinforce the piquets, but which is required to offer more strenuous resistance when the piquets have been driven back, the main line of resistance being the support.

Thirdly, we have a system of sentries with no piquets, but with the whole of the outpost company occupying a position of defence in rear.

Fourthly, the company may be required to defend two approaches some distance apart, with half the company forming a piquet on each road and with no support.

Each one of these systems would be suitable no doubt for some particular occasions; it is desirable, however, to discover certain inherent advantages and disadvantages possessed by each, which would influence us when deciding upon which to adopt in any particular case. It appears to be undesirable at night to adopt any system which requires the movement of any part of our outpost company when the enemy attacks it. Outpost work so far as resistance is concerned is essentially of a passive nature, because the companies have so much to do in other ways that no men are available for offensive operations. If sections or groups are to move forward for purposes of reinforcement directly the enemy attacks, they will come up in a hurry, they will be ignorant of the immediate situation, and they may arrive too late. If we are to have no movement when the enemy attacks, it is

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apparent that every man in the outpost company must be so placed that sooner or later he can use his rifle with effect.

We can ensure this with the second, third and fourth systems, but not with the first, and yet the first system will be useful on many occasions. We will suppose, for example, that an outpost company is defending the junction of three roads shaped like a Y, the top of the letter facing towards the enemy, and the lower part of the letter pointing towards the fighting position of the main body. There may be some obstacle like a dense wood between the two roads leading towards the enemy which would make it extremely unlikely that he will advance by both simultaneously. The point of junction of the two roads may be a very bad locality for defence even at night, whereas good positions for resistance may exist a little farther to the front along each road. It might be impossible to say whether the enemy is likely to advance by the right hand or the left hand road, although he is extremely unlikely to advance by both. It would be necessary in this case to adopt the first system, and place a piquet in the good position on each road, and keep the support at the junction ready to reinforce whichever piquet is attacked. The forward movement of the support at a critical moment is undesirable, but there is no other way out of the difficulty, unless the outpost position can be withdrawn in this neighbourhood and the single road defended, which, in many cases, might be out of the question.

With this system of defence it is essential that the support should know exactly where to go when they join the piquet; that trenches should be prepared for them, and that arrangements should be made for directing their fire correctly. In fact, the support must be practised during the night in reinforcing each piquet, and the

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distance from the support to the piquet should not exceed a few hundred yards, otherwise they may not arrive in time.

The second system appears to be convenient when the country is very open, and when it is difficult to obtain any definite guide as to the probable direction of the enemy's advance. To take a difficult case, there may be three tracks leading into that part of the position occupied by the outpost company, each track being two or three hundred yards from the other. If we adopt the first system, namely, place a piquet on each road with a support somewhere in the centre, the support may have to advance four hundred yards before reaching one of the flank piquets, and having got there it may be discovered that the piquet on the other flank is being heavily attacked. If we adopt the second system the commander of the outpost company must select the most important tactical locality in that part of the outpost position he is defending and prepare it for the occupation by his whole company. He will then place piquets on each of the three tracks well to the front, with sentries in front of them. Lines of retreat for these piquets will be prepared so as to clear the flanks of the main portion of the company in rear, and the piquets, after resisting the first attack of the enemy, will, when compelled to retire, fall back round the flanks and join the company, or remain out on the flanks according to the instructions of the company commander. It may be said that the enemy will pass by the company which is occupying the position in rear, but it is practically certain that in war he would be compelled to attack it before advancing any farther.

The third system would be suitable when only one approach is required to be defended, when the country is enclosed, and the enemy would have great difficulty in getting at the flanks of the outpost company, and especially when the enemy is known to be very close in front and

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the company is guarding the most probable line of advance. In such a case a line of retreat must be prepared for the sentries so that when driven back they will not mask the fire from the rear. Even in this case it is probable that the second system will be better, because a small piquet in advance of the company will be able to offer sufficient resistance to ascertain if a serious attack is being made, or if the sentries are being disturbed merely by a hostile patrol. The piquet would get back by the track prepared for the sentries, so as to avoid masking the fire of the company in rear.

The fourth system would be suitable in close country where two roads, some distance apart, run into the outpost position. It is best in such cases to split up the company into two parts, sending the largest part to defend the most important road. If part of the company is used as a support it is extremely unlikely to be able to reach either piquet in time to help it if attacked, owing to the distance apart of the roads.

It is impossible without studying the ground and the situation to say which system should be adopted in any particular case. The Regulations, however, appear to favour the idea that the main resistance should be offered by the piquets, the assumption no doubt being that if the piquets are driven back the whole outpost line will go. It is, however, entirely a matter of creating delay by resistance, and this depends so much upon the ground that it is impracticable to advocate one system in preference to another without actually studying a definite situation. It has been considered best, therefore, merely to point out that different systems can be adopted, and to suggest occasions when they may be employed. These suggestions are probably more useful as descriptions of the systems themselves than as an example of what should be done in any particular case.

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CHAPTER XIX

THE OUTPOST COMPANY

THE SELECTION OF POSITIONS FOR OBSERVATION AND FOR RESISTANCE

WHENEVER a soldier is being trained in the duties of a sentry in the field it is essential to provide something for him to watch for. One of the most important duties of a sentry is to use his eyes by day and his eyes and ears by night. Every sentry when he is posted should be told that men representing hostile scouts will be moving about the country in front, and that he is required to report to the piquet whenever he sees one. He will be given a definite area to watch, and he must keep his attention fixed on that area. He should be taught to look for any movement over the ground in front of him, and once he detects movement to fix his attention on that spot until he discovers what it is; he will then report the information he has obtained and again look for movement.

The men that are employed as hostile scouts should be given exact instructions as to what they are to do and when they are to do it, so that the section commander who is training his men in sentry work will know whether the sentries are alert and learning their work. For example, a scout can be ordered to appear at the edge of a certain wood at 9.30 A.M., to show his head and shoulders over the top of a hill at 9.45, cross a valley or piece of ground partially concealed by bushes or trees at

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10 A.M., get as close as he can to the sentry without being seen and then show himself for a second about 10.15, and so on.

Similarly, at night, men should be sent out as hostile patrols to approach the piquet at definite times from different directions. When the recruit is first being trained in sentry work the scout need not take great care to hide himself or to avoid making a noise, but later on, when the recruit is better trained, the scout should act as he would do in war. The recruit must be trained to listen as well as to watch, and to recognize the ordinary sounds which are to be heard in any European country at night and distinguish them from the noise made by an advancing enemy. The section commander should make a list of ordinary sounds, such as the movement of cattle grazing, the rubbing of the boughs of trees in the wind, the croaking of frogs, and the cry or movement of wild birds or other animals. It is most desirable, when the night is not very dark, to post the sentry so that he has got a clearly defined skyline in front of him, and his eyes should be tested by sending men representing hostile scouts over that skyline at stated intervals, first walking, and later on crawling, over it.

A sentry should understand that both by day and night he is assisted in his work by patrols, whose special task it is to examine ground which the sentry cannot see by day and to ascertain if any movement is going on in front of the line of sentries by night. The sentry should also be taught that the fact of a patrol going forward in no way relieves him of his duties—the patrol may be captured, or it may be compelled to take a different direction to what was at first intended, or, if it meets a hostile patrol, the latter, in its endeavours to keep out of sight of our patrol, may expose itself to the view of our sentry. At night, although the presence of one

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of our patrols in front adds to the feeling of security of the sentry, the latter will probably be pleased when it has returned, because there must always be a chance that an advancing enemy may be mistaken for our own patrol returning and vice versa. It is very difficult to arrange a definite sound signal between the patrol and the sentry when the former is returning, because it might be discovered by hostile scouts lurking in the neighbourhood, and used by them to rush a sentry post during a night attack. Perhaps the best method, if watches are available, is to fix a definite time for the patrol to return, and if it is unable to get back by that time, to come in half an hour later. A non-commissioned officer from the piquet will be present with the sentry group when the patrol is expected back, and the latter should be directed to approach as close to the sentry as is safe, and then lie down and call in a low voice the sentry's name, which the patrol would have been told beforehand. As the sentries are constantly changing, this watchword, even if discovered by the enemy, would be of little use to him. If watches are used the patrol must be very careful to avoid being seen by the enemy when striking a light to ascertain the time. With a little practice, and by carefully selecting the spot, this can be done without any possibility of the light being seen by anyone except the man with the watch.

The sentry should have a very clear idea as to what he is to do when the enemy approaches his post at night. It is very easy to say this, but it is not so easy to lay down any definite rules for his guidance. The simple plan is to shoot at sight, and probably this is the most effectual. Our Regulations, however, are not prepared to adopt such drastic methods, probably because of the risk of shooting one of our own patrols or the officer of the piquet who is visiting the sentries. The Regulations lay down that the sentry must challenge and, if he receives

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no answer, shoot at once. It is probable that he won't wait long for the answer, and he may put the cart before the horse—that is to say, shoot first and challenge afterwards.

Directly a sentry at night hears or sees any suspicious movement he must at once awaken his group. All three men will then concentrate their sense of seeing and hearing in the direction of the supposed movement. They should be very careful to avoid making the least noise, and, if possible, they should separate so as to offer a fairly wide front to any enemy who may be advancing, care being taken that all their rifles can cover the probable line of approach of the enemy. It is extremely important that the sentry group should not fire unless they are quite certain that the enemy is advancing against them. If fire is opened without cause the position of the night outposts is given away to the enemy, and the outposts themselves are needlessly disturbed.

It is almost always possible, even on the darkest nights, to select a position for a sentry group where they can see far enough to avoid being rushed with the bayonet. It must also be remembered that the darker the night the more difficult it is for the enemy's patrols or his attacking troops to move about with certainty, and that in such circumstances the enemy, who do not know the ground and do not know when they are going to stumble against an obstacle and receive a blaze of fire, are liable to feel the strain on the nerves much more than the sentries and patrols of the outpost position, who know the ground both by day and night, and who have no fear of running into an obstacle.

When selecting a position for a sentry at night a good deal depends upon the degree of darkness and consequently the comparative value of eyesight as compared with hearing. On a very dark night, when a sentry can

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only see a few yards in front of him, it is evident that his ears will be more useful than his eyes; furthermore the enemy's difficulties will be increased by the darkness, and he is likely to make more noise by stumbling over unforeseen obstructions. The direction of the wind has more influence on the conveyance of sound than the relative height of the sentry above or below the advancing enemy. On a still night, however, it is probable that a sentry on high ground can hear better than when on low ground, because there is likely to be less obstruction in the way of trees, &c., to interfere with the sound waves passing through the atmosphere. On the other hand, it is more difficult to see when looking down into a dark valley than it is when looking up from a valley over a skyline in front.

It appears, therefore, on a very dark night, when a sentry's ears are more useful than his eyes, and especially if there is no wind or if the wind is blowing from the direction of the enemy towards the outposts, that the sentry should be placed on high ground with low ground in front. When, however, the darkness is not very great and the powers of sight more nearly approach in value the powers of hearing it will be better to place him on lower ground looking over a bare skyline in front. For night work a sentry should be taught to fire without looking over his sights; that is to say, he should keep his eyes fixed on the enemy, put his gun to his shoulder and fire. This can be practised on a miniature range when there is just sufficient light to see a dummy man in front, but not enough to see the sights of the rifle. After a little instruction most men will be able to hit the dummy almost every time.

It is desirable, when possible, to place a sentry at night in a locality where, owing to obstacles on each flank, the enemy will be inclined to narrow the front of

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his advance. For example, if a track leading from the direction of the enemy passes through a small ravine, or through a wood, or very enclosed piece of ground, the sentry should be posted opposite the place where the track emerges into the open.

A sentry should always be provided with a small obstacle placed from ten to fifty yards in front of his post, according to the distance he can see, which latter is ruled by the comparative darkness of the night. The obstacle should be low so that it cannot be seen by the approaching enemy, and its value is increased if a wire or rope is attached to some object which will fall down with a loud clatter when anyone trips over the obstacle.

By day a sentry must be able to see the whole of the ground in front of him without being seen. If the features of the ground prevent this, a position must be chosen where he can see so much of the ground that no one can advance to the general line of sentries in the area allotted to him without being discovered. In fairly open country by day there is no reason why sentries should not be placed four or five hundred yards in front of a piquet if by that means they get a much better view over the ground in front. It is not desirable, however, to push forward a single sentry group in this manner, because the men are likely to be cut off by an enterprising party of hostile scouts, if the latter can work round the flanks by some covered approach. In close country and at night the sentries should never be far from the piquet, otherwise the enemy might discover their position and work round between them and the piquet.

The best way to select a position for a sentry by day is to go forward from the locality selected for the piquet until a view is obtained over the ground to the front; if the whole of the necessary area can be seen from this

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point, and it is quite certain that the observation can be taken up by the sentries on each flank without a break, there is no occasion to seek further, provided a position can be found where the sentry group cannot be seen by the enemy. Failing these conditions we must go farther to the front, or perhaps slightly to a flank, until we find another possible locality which might do fairly well, and so on until we have found three or four alternative positions, when we must select the best. It is always desirable for the sentry to be able to see the piquet by day so that he or one of the group can signal back to the piquet any information they may obtain; failing this one of the group must go back to the piquet and report what has been seen. It is a mistake to suppose that the best position for a sentry by day is always on the top of a hill or ridge. It occurs frequently that when standing on the top of a ridge looking across a valley at another ridge opposite, little more can be seen than when half-way down the slope or even when stationed on the near side of the valley. The enemy's patrols will always look for our sentries on the tops of hills and will not expect to find them in valleys or on the slopes of hills. A patrol is bound to go to the top of a hill to observe, because the party is isolated, it has to be careful about its flanks and avoid being cut off by a hostile patrol; a sentry, however, is not nervous about his flanks because there are other sentries to the right and left of him. When selecting the position for a sentry group by day attention should be paid to the desirability of a covered approach from the piquet, so that the group can be visited without the fact being discovered by a hostile patrol.

Occasions may occur by day when the best position for observation is also the best for resistance, and the sentry can be posted in the actual locality to be defended

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by the piquet. There is no objection to this provided that the men of the piquet as well as the sentry group remain concealed from the enemy's view. In such a case it is best to keep the men of the piquet under cover, in rear of the fire trench they will occupy when attacked, so as to avoid any chance of their being seen by the enemy, all arrangements for resistance, such as the construction of the fire trench, clearing the foreground and building obstacles, having been completed whilst the front of the outpost position has been occupied by troops sent forward to cover the establishment of the outpost companies, as laid down in the Regulations.

In really high-class outpost work, an individual placed in the best possible locality for observing the outpost position from the enemy's side should not be able to discover a single movement throughout the whole day, in spite of the fact that sentries have been relieved and visited, and patrols have gone by to reconnoitre ground towards the enemy. The action of patrols and scouts sent forward from the outpost position, either by day or night, resembles in certain respects the action of scouts on other occasions and can be dealt with more conveniently in Chapter XXI on the training of company scouts.

When selecting a position for a piquet at night, it should be remembered that the locality may be occupied until after daylight the next morning, especially if the enemy makes an attack on the outpost line as soon as it is light enough to see. The main consideration, however, is to delay an attack during the hours of darkness, when view, and consequently effective fire, is limited to a few dozen yards in front of the piquet. The locality to be held by the piquet as regards the front, which is guarded by the outpost company, is decided by the existing approaches from the direction of the enemy through

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this part of the outpost position. If there are two tracks a piquet must be placed on each; if there are no tracks, and the country is perfectly open, the front which is to be guarded by one outpost company must be reduced and the piquets placed closer together, a position being chosen for each piquet where it can fire over as large an area of ground as possible straight to the front and also half right and half left. When the ground is partly open and partly enclosed and there are no tracks the piquet should be placed in the open part, because the enemy is likely to avoid enclosed country.

The locality to be held by the piquet as regards its position from front to rear will depend almost entirely upon the nature of the country, the object would be to select a spot where the piquet could bring a very heavy fire to bear on any approach and also be able to fire half right and half left. For example, a good place for a piquet at night would be on perfectly flat open ground with a road without any hedges running through it. A line in the shape of half an oval or ellipse could be traced across the road and over the ground right and left of it to mark the position of the piquet. The length of this line would depend upon the number of men in the piquet, bearing in mind the desirability of holding as wide a front as possible. By this means the flat part of the oval would provide a very heavy fire down the main approach, and the rounded ends would provide fire towards the flanks. It is probable that if the piquet consists of ten men they can occupy a front of at least twenty yards and at the same time remain under the complete control of the piquet commander.

When the enemy attacks a piquet at night he will first endeavour to ascertain the exact position it is occupying; he will then move to a flank and endeavour to attack the piquet in flank. To prevent such action it is a very good

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plan to establish two small posts consisting of three to six men, according to the size of the piquet, on each flank of the piquet, in the locality which the enemy is most likely to make for when endeavouring to obtain a good position for attack. These small posts will come as a surprise to the enemy, and will probably stop the attack altogether or at least cause very considerable delay. It is desirable to arrange the line of retreat of the sentries towards one of these posts instead of directly back to the piquet, so as to avoid masking the fire of the latter. The enemy is unlikely to move against the flank posts until he has discovered the position of the piquet, so that the former should not disclose their position by fire until actually attacked. A small obstacle can be placed in front of the flank posts to strengthen their defence. These small posts will also be useful to secure localities on the flanks of the piquets which, if occupied by the enemy, will endanger the continued defence of the locality (*see* page 370).

Obstacles constructed in front of piquets, sentries, or small posts on the flanks should be very low so that they cannot be seen at night. Perhaps the best obstacle is a single trip wire drawn tight and attached to stout stakes about one foot above the level of the ground. A similar wire a little higher can be placed parallel to the first and about a yard in rear of it. Any one approaching the sentry will trip over the first wire, and before he can recover himself will be brought down by the second wire. A single hostile scout would then be captured by the sentry or post. The stakes should be fairly close together and driven firmly into the ground, the wire being securely attached to each stake, so that if a strand between two posts is cut the remainder will not be loosened. An obstacle of this kind requires very little material and very little time to construct. If no wire is available stout saplings can be employed, these being tied firmly to the

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stakes at the required height. They are not so good as wire, but it does not take much to trip up a man at night.

The selection of a fire position for a piquet at night differs from the ordinary defence by day, chiefly because there is more latitude as regards going forward or back, and because the ordinary facilities for defence are reduced. For example, when a company is occupying a regular defensive posstion by day, with other companies on both flanks, it is compelled to site its fire trenches more or less .n conformity with those companies, because if it goes forward or backward out of the general line of defence it will reduce either its own arc of fire or that of the companies immediately on its flanks, and in the first case it may form an objectionable salient. The only limitations as to a forward or backward position of an outpost company are the undesirability of increasing the extent of the outpost position, and the risk of the outpost company concerned or those immediately on its flanks being cut off. For example, if one outpost company is placed considerably in advance of the general line of outposts it may be necessary to place the flank outpost companies nearer to it than if they were in one general line, and consequently more outpost companies would be required to occupy the whole position, and the flanks of the advanced company might be very exposed. If, on the other hand, one outpost company is withdrawn a considerable distance in rear of the general line, the inner flanks of the outpost companies on each side might be exposed. When an obstacle like a river or stream which is difficult to cross, especially at night, runs along the outpost position, or when the country is very enclosed and extremely difficult to traverse at night, these objections are removed, because the obstacle reduces the total number of outpost companies required, and also protects the flanks of the companies,

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which are only required to defend the approaches from the direction of the enemy.

The methods of offering resistance in any type of country by night and in very enclosed country by day differ considerably from those which can be applied in very open, or even in fairly open, country by day. In the first case the company is acting entirely by itself in accordance with the general instructions which have been issued by the outpost commander. No one can see what is happening to the outpost companies on the right and left, dangers are apt to be exaggerated, and resistance reduced owing to lack of knowledge regarding the situation on the flanks. As each outpost company is acting entirely by itself, its responsibility for securing the front allotted to it is even greater than by day in open country, when a good deal of what is occurring on the flanks can be observed, and when one outpost company by its action can assist another company to the right or left. If we have six companies occupying an outpost position by night, four of which are well trained and thoroughly understand the requirements of the situation, and two that are the reverse, the latter by failure in resistance or by premature retirement may not only endanger the companies on the flanks and reduce their power of creating delay, but will also jeopardize the safety of the main body, and consequently the prospect of success in the approaching battle.

It is extremely important, therefore, that the commander of an outpost company, and also the non-commissioned officers and men, should understand that at night everything depends upon their own power of resistance, and that even control by a superior commander will rarely be possible. They must realize that other outpost companies are placed in a similar position to themselves and must avoid the ignominy of being driven

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back when these other companies, though pressed just as hard, have maintained their position.

It occurs, sometimes, that an attack is made on an outpost line especially at night, with the main object of discovering the dispositions of the outposts. Such attacks are usually carried out by small bodies of hostile troops, such as one or two companies, directed against different parts of the outpost position Having gained the required information, and perhaps driven back some of the outpost companies, these hostile detachments are withdrawn. It may be taken as a rule, which is very frequently neglected, that in the absence of any definite instructions an outpost company when driven back should never retire farther than is absolutely necessary; and, as soon as the hostile pressure is removed the company should again advance and occupy its original position or get as close to it as possible. An outpost company retiring, especially at night, is very apt to lose touch with the enemy and withdraw more rapidly and a farther distance than is absolutely necessary.

It is very difficult to indicate any definite guides as to the selection of a position for a piquet by night, because the types of country which may be met with are so extremely varied (*see* page 362). The requirements of the sentry for seeing and hearing at night and of the piquet for resisting, together with the fact that the sentry should not be far from the piquet, must be taken together. The natural inclination is to place the piquets on commanding ground looking down hill, and the sentry on low ground looking up hill; there are, however, many occasions when this method might be greatly modified or even reversed. If there is any wind it is undesirable to place a sentry near trees because it is difficult to hear, although a trained ear will detect the snap of a twig or the rattle of accoutrements even when a continuous sound

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like that of a running stream, or wind in the trees, appears to drown all other noise. It will occur, frequently, that sentries must be placed near trees or running water, and therefore it is desirable for us to train our men to recognize these contrasts of sound, so that they can distinguish one from another.

Perhaps the most important consideration is that the piquet, either by the selection of the locality or by clearing the foreground, has a good and sweeping field of fire for as far as the men can see on the particular night. This field of fire may be sloping down hill, it may be on level ground, or even sloping up hill; the last, however, is not always suitable for repulsing an attack at dawn, especially if the locality would be exposed to fire from some higher ground which the enemy can occupy and which cannot be seen by night.

A fire trench behind a hedge or wall is suitable for a piquet because the difficulty of assault by the enemy is increased. If, added to this, a low obstacle is placed in front of the piquet and not too far off to be seen at night the frontal defence should be very strong. Localities which are quite untenable by day are frequently capable of strong defence by night. For example, a position opposite a bridge over an unfordable stream, which is absolutely commanded by high ground on the opposite bank by day, might be an excellent place for a piquet by night. The flanks would be secured by the stream, the bridge itself would be exposed to an intense fire from the piquet, and the high ground on the far bank would be useless to the enemy, because if he once attempted to drive back the piquet by fire directed against the flashes of their rifles, he would be unlikely to make any further advance or attempt to rush the bridge and charge the piquet with the bayonet. If fire is once opened by an attacking force at night it is not easy to

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resume offensive movement, and the attack usually fails; in any case considerable delay is certain to result, and thus the piquet will have carried out its most important duty. When such a locality is held by night it is advisable to prepare an alternative position, as close in rear as possible, from which the high ground on the far bank can be neutralized, and which can be occupied by the piquet when it is getting sufficiently light to enable the enemy to use the commanding position; the same applies to all localities held by a piquet which are good or satisfactory by night but are unsuitable by day.

A road leading through a wood is not a bad locality to hold at night in spite of the fact that the fire of the piquet is limited practically to the road itself. It is difficult for the enemy to get through the wood at night and attack the flanks of the piquet, especially if a place is chosen where the ground in front of the piquet is clear of undergrowth or where there is an open space. If plenty of time is available it is a good thing to clear two tracks through the wood, one on each side of the road, like a V with the point on the road just in front of the piquet. The enemy, finding the road defended, will get into the wood and endeavour to work round the flank of the piquet, he will eventually strike the track, he will be unable to ascertain its exact direction, and will blunder once more into the piquet.

There is no branch of military operations where ingenuity and common sense are more urgently required than in outpost work, provided always that the plan and methods adopted are simple to the last degree. Anything complicated or hinging for success on the movement of part of the piquet at the critical moment of attack is almost certain to fail.

If a party of school-boys are anxious to slide on an unsafe but fascinating piece of ice, and are afraid of

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premature discovery by those in authority over them, they will post one or more boys to give warning of the enemy's approach. The positions selected for these sentries will be where they can see without being seen, and where they can give sufficient warning of danger to enable the whole party to engage in some innocent amusement elsewhere, before the enemy, in the shape of a schooolmaster, arrives on the scene. These boys, without any military training, have applied ingenuity and common sense to the problem they desired to solve. They are not tied down by any regulation, they have not been taught one way to do a thing, and consequently they are not afraid of doing it another way. They are not like the military gentleman who sometimes puts his sentries or his piquet in the places where he thinks his superior officer will approve; they are posting their sentries where they will be able to do what is required from them and nothing else, and we should copy the boys when we are deciding upon the details of our outpost arrangements.

When a piquet has to be placed at night on a road leading through open fields with hedges, banks or walls, a locality should be selected where hedges on opposite sides join the road at the same place. By this means the two fields right and left of the road can be covered by the fire of the piquet. If the enemy attacks, his scouts will be stopped first on the road, then they will try the open field on the flank, or will work round by a hedgerow or wall, and endeavour to gain the flank of the piquet with a view to leading the attack against it. Our small party on each flank of the piquet (*see* p. 395) will be posted on the most likely approach and will frustrate this attempt. The only course then open to the enemy is to rush the piquet straight in front, or endeavour to make a wide detour, when they may lose their way or run into another piquet.

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When an outpost position at night runs along a ridge, and the country is open, it is better to place the piquets on the low ground in front of the ridge than anywhere near the top of the ridge. Even when posted half-way down the slope it is probable that they will present a skyline view to the enemy when advancing up the slope towards them, instead of the enemy presenting a skyline view to them.

When the country is quite open, and the enemy could advance anywhere across it, and there are no marked features to indicate good positions for the piquets, localities must be artificially prepared, and the dispositions of the outposts will be of a mathematical nature. The piquets would be placed two to four hundred yards apart, according to the proximity of the enemy, and they would be made as strong as possible. This is by far the most unfavourable type of country, and one which we constantly met with during the South African War. In fact, it is probable that the lessons we have deduced from that campaign as regards outpost work are more capable of application to such country than any other. It appears to be out of the question to have supports wandering over such ground to reinforce the piquets; it is quite probable in the absence of roads or tracks that they will take the wrong direction, and will easily mistake the enemy for their own comrades or vice versa.

When a piquet has to be placed at night on a very winding road, which only affords a short field of fire, with hedges on each side, the longest stretch available should be selected, and the men placed just in front of one bend with an obstacle across the road on the near side of the next bend. The enemy advancing down the road will drive back the sentry, and will then encounter the obstacle which will be discovered by his scouts. The leading company will halt in close formation

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immediately behind the bend, whilst the obstacle is being destroyed, so that it is desirable to cut a gap beyond the bend in the hedge nearest to the piquet, so that fire can be directed upon the road just behind the bend, against the enemy in close formation.

The rear side of a clearing which runs through a wood in the general line of the outpost position by night is a good locality for a piquet placed to guard a track or road through the wood and crossing the clearing. It should be easy to stop a frontal attack by the proper use of obstacles and fire, and also easy to discover any hostile movement across the clearing to the right or left of the piquet. The enemy, having discovered the piquet posted on the far side of the clearing, will know that there are other piquets to the right and left of it, and their men may not be very anxious to cross the clearing and enter the wood on the far side. They will realize that the movement has almost certainly been observed by the enemy whilst they were crossing the clearing, they will be wondering when they will be called upon suddenly to repel a bayonet charge, and will be very anxious about the safety of their line of retreat.

When an outpost company is called upon to occupy for the night a rocky ridge with open country in front, the commander should inspect the country allotted to him from some point in front by day and consider what part of the ridge he would endeavour to secure, if he was the enemy, contemplating an attack at night; he should then decide upon the best approaches to this locality, and this will give him an idea as to where to place his piquets and how to secure the important position on the top. If the ridge happens to be the fighting position for the main body it must be retained at all costs and the company cannot retire from it. The surest way of retaining it is for each outpost company to secure what

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would be the most commanding and important locality by day, because even if the enemy succeed in gaining a footing on the ridge during the night it will be of little use to him directly daylight appears, and the main body, assisted by the outpost companies still holding all commanding localities, should have no difficulty in dislodging him. In such a case the main resistance must be offered by the greater part of the outpost company defending the selected locality on the top, weak piquets being posted to delay the enemy on the most likely approaches. These piquets when driven back must retire, by a prearranged track, clear of the flanks of the outpost company and assist in the defence of the ridge. The outpost company itself must be very strongly entrenched with a good field of fire available for use by day, and must be prepared for defence facing either flank as well as to the front and possibly to the rear, if there is any chance of the enemy being able to work round to the back. With a properly entrenched position, assisted by obstacles, the company should be able to repulse any attack by night, and before daylight arrives assistance would be forthcoming from the main body.

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CHAPTER XX

THE OUTPOST COMPANY

THE WITHDRAWAL OF OUTPOST COMPANIES WHEN DRIVEN BACK BY THE ENEMY. OUTPOSTS TO A FORCE TEMPORARILY HALTED, OR WHEN IT HAS BEEN CLOSELY ENGAGED DURING THE DAY. OUTPOSTS TO A FORCE HALTED IN COLUMN OF ROUTE.

THE Regulations lay down that each outpost company commander is to be informed as to the degree of resistance which is to be offered by the outposts, and whenever the order goes round that the outposts are to hold out to the last it must, of course, be obeyed, whatever the nature of the country may be. It is fairly certain that the greater part of each outpost company carefully entrenched and assembled in the locality which the enemy will be most desirous to secure, and at the same time prepared for defence on every side, should be able to repel any attack at night, and although the enemy may penetrate between the outpost companies it will be of little use to him until he has gained possession of the most commanding localities. If, on the other hand, the piquets are to provide the necessary resistance, they will certainly be closer together than the outpost companies as a whole, but they will be much weaker, and some of them may be rushed at night. Whichever plan is adopted in such a case it appears to be desirable to concentrate nearly the whole strength of the outpost company either in one

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commanding or important locality with very weak piquets to guard the approaches, or to reduce the number of piquets to the possible minimum, make each as strong as possible and have no support. By this means every one will know exactly what he has got to do, no movement will be necessary in the dark, and every locality which is defended will be held till the last.

In cases where the outpost companies are not required to offer such strenuous resistance, the necessary delay must be ensured partly in the original position held by the outpost companies and partly during the retreat towards the fighting position which has been selected for the main body. The commander of each section of the outpost position must, therefore, prepare alternative but definite schemes of operations according to whichever one or more of his outpost companies is compelled to fall back. It will rarely be possible at night for one company to co-operate with the other during this retreat, and the chief requirements are that no company retires until it is driven back by the enemy, ordered back by the commander of the outpost section, or, in the absence of such orders, finds that it will be cut off from the fighting position by the defeat of the company on its flank and by the advance of the enemy if it remains any longer in its original position.

Each outpost company commander must know to what part of the fighting position he is to retire; he must reconnoitre the road to it, decide where he can halt and delay the enemy during his retreat, taking every advantage of an obstacle such as a stream, a defile, clearing in a wood, &c., and how he will dispose his company for defence on reaching the fighting position, remembering always that no further retreat is possible, and that he and his company must maintain their defence on the fighting position at all costs until the main body

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arrives. If, however, each outpost company has offered a strenuous resistance in its original position, which has been skilfully prepared for defence, and has again delayed the enemy whilst retiring towards the fighting position of the main body, it is probable that the latter position will be occupied by troops from the main body before the outpost companies reach it.

When the outposts are, for some unavoidable cause, very close in front of the fighting position, and the billets or bivouacs of the main body are some distance in rear, it is probable that the outposts will be provided with a reserve which will be entrenched on the fighting position and will assist the outpost companies to defend it when they are driven back.

The selection of positions for outpost companies by day is far more simple than by night, because the only limits to view are the obstructions offered by the natural features of the ground and by trees, buildings, &c. The chief point to remember is that small detachments like outpost companies can delay an enemy for a longer time than on low ground, especially when it is very enclosed, than on commanding and open positions. A great line of bare hills may be suitable for defence by a large force, but they afford the fewest possible facilities for delaying action on the part of outposts, because it is so easy for the enemy to turn the flanks of the company. If an enemy advances in strength to drive back our outposts which are placed in enclosed country, he is bound to keep to the roads until the outposts are met. He must then deploy at least three or four companies to attack each outpost company, so that he can hold the outpost company in front and attack it in flank or envelop it. This requires time, and as soon as the outpost company commander realizes that his line of retreat is in danger, or that the enemy is about to deliver an assault, he will

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retire. The country being enclosed, he will have little difficulty in slipping away, and, as he is on low ground, the enemy on occupying his original position will have no chance of pursuing him with fire or ascertaining his line of retreat. An outpost company retiring from low ground on to higher ground in rear, presumably the fighting position of the main body, will always have an advantage, as regards command, over the enemy, and should be able to delay the enemy's advance much more than when retiring from high on to low ground. If, therefore, the outpost company whilst retiring has to pass over a succession of ridges, and the country is enclosed, the main resistance should be offered on low ground and whilst retiring uphill. The top of each ridge should not be held, the outpost company moving rapidly over it and gaining the low ground beyond before the enemy crosses the ridge.

When the country is quite open and flat, the retirement of the outpost company is a difficult operation, owing to the long range of the modern rifle. It will be necessary for the company to be very widely extended. The control, in consequence, will be greatly in the hands of section commanders, and one of the central sections under the orders of the company commander should act as the directing unit, all other sections conforming to its movements, having regard to mutual support and the features of the ground The supply of ammunition will be an important consideration, because, by means of frequent bursts of rapid fire, the enemy's advance can be delayed, and the weakness of the firing line compensated for by an increased rate of fire. The company commander will, as far as possible, keep in touch with outpost companies on his right and left, and if he himself is bearing the main brunt of the attack he can expect assistance from them by closing towards his flank, and thus pre-

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venting the enemy's mounted troops from getting round him.

The enemy will not deploy an army to drive back an outpost line, and, therefore, he will only attack one part of it, consequently an outpost company that is not being heavily attacked itself should always be retiring a little later than the company that is being attacked on its flank, and thus at the same time protect the flank of the other company and possibly threaten the flank of the enemy or at least delay his advance.

If the country is open, but of an undulating or hilly nature, every advantage must be taken of the ground. At each halt the section that is holding the best locality for defence, frequently on low ground, must defend it until the other sections have retired, these latter, remembering that the former section has to remain in its present position until they have got away, must judge carefully when it is absolutely necessary for them to go. They will then occupy another position in rear and cover the retreat of the section which is following. When the fighting position for the main body is approached, whatever the nature of the ground may be, each outpost company will close gradually on its centre or on a flank and fall back upon the prearranged locality in the fighting position which it must hold at all costs until the main body arrives, even although the enemy may gain a footing on the other parts of the fighting position.

The retreat of outposts in very open country by day will be assisted frequently by artillery of the main body and thus their difficulties will be decreased. Owing to the difficulty of control and the necessity for section commanders to act on their own initiative and in accordance with the movements of the directing section, it is necessary to practise the company in such an operation during collective training. When ground is available a good

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opportunity will occur when the company is returning after the day's work from some distant training area, a skeleton attacking force being provided to represent the enemy.

Having in this and the last two chapters considered the outposts of a force which has halted to rest and feed, we can now turn to the requirements of a force which is assembled at one place within striking distance of the enemy and is temporarily halted, either awaiting further orders or for some operation to develop. To judge from the experience of war and more especially of peace training, it would appear that outposts are rarely employed on such occasions, with the result that we encounter numerous examples of troops being surprised when they least expected to encounter the enemy. It is the duty of every commander, including the officer commanding a company, to look after the safety of his troops whenever they are halted by themselves in any position whatever within striking distance of the enemy. We find examples of a single company actually engaged with the enemy on the flank of other companies failing to send scouts into a wood close to its exposed flank; another company sent to hold a locality on the flank neglecting to look after its own flank; another company waiting in reserve on the flank of a defensive position being surprised by hostile mounted troops who had evaded or driven back the cavalry protecting that flank. The same has occurred both during peace training and in war with larger formations such as a battalion and a brigade, the reason being that the responsible commanders have been under the impression that they have been protected by other troops, and that it is unnecessary to take any immediate precautions.

It should be remembered that scouts are required on such occasions not only to look for the enemy, but to

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ascertain any change in the situation as regards our own troops. For example, a force waiting for any length of time within striking distance of the enemy, usually in the neighbourhood of active hostilities, should be prepared for any emergency, and also to act immediately upon any orders it may receive. It may be called upon to advance, retire, attack or defend, or stay where it is; in every one of these cases it is imperative for the commander to be informed at once if any hostile move is being made unexpectedly in his direction, or, if the situation of his own side, as he originally understood it, has in any way changed, he will want to know the best way to advance, retire, &c., if he receives orders to that effect, and all this can be done by a little care and forethought and by the use of a few scouts. When a company is halted in such a situation, and is alongside other companies, the responsibility rests with the commander of the whole, but when the company is by itself the officer commanding it is alone responsible for the safety of his men and for gaining all necessary information about other troops in the neighbourhood, about the ground, and about the enemy.

It is quite sufficient to send out a few company scouts and to send a message to other troops in the vicinity stating that the company is in a certain locality and has been ordered to wait there, and asking for information as to the course of events.

Similarly, whenever a company finds itself on the flank of any attacking or defending line or of any outpost position it is the business of the officer commanding to secure that flank in spite of any precautions which may have been taken by higher commanders. All that is required is information which will prevent a sudden surprise. The scouts need not go far: if there is a small hill close on the flank one or two scouts can be sent to the top of the hill; if there is a wood a few scouts can be sent a

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hundred yards into the wood to prevent the enemy suddenly appearing on the edge of the wood and opening fire on the flank of the company.

When a company is ordered to move forward to support an attack scouts can be sent on to ascertain the nature of the ground in front, so that isolated localities exposed to hostile artillery or infantry fire may be avoided, and obstacles traversed at the easiest and safest point. It is our business to look after the troops we command whenever our command is temporarily detached within possible striking distance of the enemy, or whenever we are on a flank of any force which is engaged with the enemy. With a force the size of a company we cannot send our scouts more than a few hundred yards, but these few hundred yards may stave off a serious disaster.

Another situation when outposts are required is when a force has been closely engaged with the enemy during the day, neither side having gained a marked advantage over the other, and when the troops on both sides are occupying during the night the positions they have gained or held during the day. It is evident in such a situation that elaborate outposts are out of the question, because the distance between the opposing forces is too small to permit of their use. The spirit of the offensive should, however, remain, and the side which can first establish small detachments close to the enemy is the one which is most likely to get a good night's rest. If there are five hundred yards between us and the enemy and we can place our outposts two hundred yards in front of our position, the enemy can hardly place his farther than one hundred yards in front of his trenches, and thus we are a hundred yards to the good If we are separated by only two hundred yards it is doubtful if either side could place any outposts without bringing on a confused engagement during the night which is unlikely to lead to any result

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except useless loss of life. Such a situation would be dealt with best by placing listening posts of three men as close to the enemy's position as possible to give warning of any movement, passing of orders, &c.

Since any outposts we use on such an occasion are intended to give us warning of an attack during the night it is desirable to consider whether the original attackers are more likely to initiate an attack than the original defenders. Judging from history and omitting the besieged garrison of a fortress, it appears that the attackers have carried out such an operation more frequently than the defenders, especially during the war in Manchuria. The attack also appears to have more to gain by such an operation than the defence, because if the night attack is successful it will go far towards winning the battle, whereas a successful counter-stroke from the defenders' position can do little more than beat back the attackers for a few hundred yards. To drive back a small portion of the attacking line is nothing like such a successful blow as to gain possession of a small part of the defenders' position. On the other hand, in those parts of the line of defence where the attack has gained a position very close to the trenches and where the struggle for superiority of fire during the day has wavered frequently in the balance, it may be vital to the defence to drive back the enemy and the only prospect of doing so is by means of a night attack. The question of the moral of the opposing sides will also come in, and there is little doubt that the attack has the advantage in this respect and is more likely to be in a position to initiate such an operation and carry it to a successful conclusion than the defence. The attackers are already within an ace of winning, the defenders have been pinned to their ground, and a very heavy casualty list might be saved by a successful attack, whereas the defenders may not only lose heavily during

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the night attack, but will lose more during the next day's fighting even if their attack is successful. On the whole, therefore, it appears that when we are fighting a defensive battle we are more likely to be subject to a night attack than when we are on the attacking side, except in those parts of the battlefield where the attack has already gained a position very close to the defenders' trenches.

Taking the attacking side first, our listening posts should discover very easily in the night whether the defenders are constructing any obstacle in front of their position, our scouts also should be able to creep forward and ascertain if there are any obstacles which already existed but were carefully hidden and escaped our notice in daylight. If such obstacles exist, or are being constructed, it is probable that the enemy do not intend to deliver a night attack and are preparing to meet one delivered by ourselves. This, of course, would apply to any part of the line of battle, so it appears that the first duty of our scouts is to ascertain if obstacles exist in front of the defenders or if they are being constructed.

The next question which naturally arises is whether it is worth while to place piquets in front of our line of attack with sentries beyond them. Can the piquets serve any useful purpose in the way of warning our troops who are lying out asleep in the position they have gained? It is practically certain that our troops will be asleep, because they have been worn out by the operations during the day. If piquets are placed in front of the line we have gained, and the men are suddenly awakened, the piquets will probably receive a very heavy fire from their own comrades. There is no doubt that some men must stay awake all night, in addition to the scouts in front, and that the remainder of the men should, if possible, be allowed to go to sleep with their rifles fully charged close alongside of them and ready for use directly the men are roused.

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No doubt the first operation to be concluded by the attack as soon as it is too dark for the defenders to see to fire will be a reorganization of the firing line, an endeavour being made to get together as silently as possible the men of each regiment and of each company. In fact, on some occasions the front line of the attack may be relieved during the early part of the night by fresh men from the reserve, and the original firing line may be withdrawn to form up and reorganize in rear. The wounded will also require attention and the men in the original firing line will need food, water and ammunition: their own ration will provide the first but the last two must be brought up from the rear. As soon as the reorganization is complete, and the men have been provided with water and ammunition, one section in each company in the firing line can be ordered to remain awake for one hour ready to open fire at a moment's notice. They will be relieved at the end of the hour by another section, and so on by the third and fourth sections if the whole company is deployed in the firing line; if not, one section from every two companies should always remain awake. By this means a quarter of the whole of the infantry in the firing line will always be awake and the remainder asleep. This should be sufficient for instantaneous fire, which in a few moments would be supplemented by magazine fire from the whole of that part of the line which is being attacked. It is out of the question for the attackers to place obstacles in front of their position, and it is probably highly undesirable for them to construct trenches because it will be very difficult to get the men out of them to continue the attack next day. The idea of "sapping" up to a defender's position may be quite correct when days or weeks have been spent on its defences, but does not appear to offer sufficient advantages for adoption in an ordinary

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encounter battle where the defenders have had little more than one night to improve their position.

If the attack is to remain on the defensive during the night and continue its operations at dawn or when it is light enough to see next day, it is important to consider the action of the listening posts and scouts who are sent forward towards the enemy's trenches during the night. The attack being on the defensive for the time being it is quite certain that any movement of scouts or listening posts during the night is highly undesirable. It will be impossible to distinguish friend from foe and a series of skirmishes will be going on all night, sometimes the enemy's scouts fighting against ours and sometimes each fighting with their own side; no good result whatever being obtained, and the whole front line of the attack being kept constantly alert to say nothing of frequent bursts of fire, which will demolish alike our own listening posts and those of the enemy. We may as well realize that the situation is one of intense strain on the nerves of the troops, which is only relieved by the physical longing for sleep at all costs. It is possible, therefore, that any man who is awake and expecting an attack will fire off his rifle on the least provocation, and the lives of the listening posts or scouts in front will not be worth much.

It is quite certain that listening posts are necessary and also it is highly desirable to reconnoitre close to the enemy's position to ascertain if there are any obstacles in front of it or if any are being constructed. The best solution of this extremely difficult problem appears to be that the listening posts should either find a position in front which is defiladed from their own side or else quietly dig a small trench One listening post in front of every two companies in the attacking line should be sufficient to give warning of any hostile attack, and these should

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be placed on a dark night at least half-way between the attacking line and the defenders' position. The next difficulty to overcome is how to ensure that the men in these posts remain awake, and the only solution appears to be that they must be visited periodically by an officer or non-commissioned officer from the attacking line. Whilst this officer is going out and returning every possible precaution must be taken to prevent the attacking line in rear opening fire. There must be some watchword or signal, to be changed every time the listening post is visited, so that the men on the look-out in the firing line and the men at the listening post will know when friend or foe is approaching them. By this means no one will be moving about in front of the position except the enemy's patrols, if he sends out any, and also the officer who, at stated intervals, will be visiting or carrying out the relief of the listening posts. This movement will be confined to definite localities and, during its progress, care can be taken to prevent fire from being opened from the rear.

On a clear night when any movement in front of the enemy's trenches can be seen there is no occasion to send any listening patrols to the front, because the enemy can be watched by men specially told off for the duty under a non-commissioned officer who belong to the section which for the time being is awake.

It is fairly certain that the defenders will be even more anxious than the attackers to avoid any skirmishing between scouts, especially if they contemplate making a night attack, and it may be anticipated that they will establish listening posts in much the same manner as the attackers.

Any scouting which is required should be done from the listening posts direct towards the enemy, but this should be necessary only when definite information of

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required as to the construction of obstacles by the defenders or on any other important point. Since the defenders appear to be more subject to night attacks than the attacking side, the importance of great vigilance and early warning appears to be accentuated in their case. We have seen already that the repulse of part of the attacking line by a night counter-stroke is merely a highly undesirable and retrograde event for the attack, but does not mean necessarily that the attack is permanently defeated. It appears to be sufficient, therefore, for the attackers to repel the night counter-stroke by fire, which is simpler and less disorganizing than a bayonet charge and should be successful. The reason for this is explained easily, because it is much more difficult to get a lot of men who are half-asleep to rise up and charge an enemy than it is to get them to open fire at any moment. Whichever side attacks at night can choose its own time and get everything ready for the blow, so that the bayonet alone can be used; but whichever side is temporarily on the defensive can hardly meet a sudden attack except by fire.

On the defenders' side a successful night attack upon any part of their position may mean complete defeat; the defence, therefore, to be successful must be active, and the question of obstacles at once comes in. If the attacking side initiates a night attack it will move forward without firing, because the desire is to reach the enemy's trenches and drive back the defenders with the bayonet. If there are obstacles in front of the position the defenders may be able to hold their own by fire action only, and yet in the Manchurian campaign the Japanese made night attacks because they could not surmount the obstacles in front of the Russian trenches during an attack by day. If there are no obstacles in front of the defenders' position, it appears to be essential that a night attack made by the attacking side should be met by the

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defenders with a bayonet counter-stroke delivered out of their trenches. This means that the whole of the defending force must remain awake all night. We read in the accounts of the Manchurian campaign that the Russian troops on several occasions were completely worn out by want of sleep owing to the frequent night attacks of the Japanese.

It may appear from the above that night attacks are too hazardous to attempt, and that the difficulties to be overcome are so great that troops can hardly be expected to bring such operations to a successful conclusion. The difficulties have been put forward here in some detail, and without any reserve, because unless we face them in peace we shall not overcome them in war. They are, however, merely comparative. Which is worse: to carry out a night attack with a small part of an attacking force, with a 50 per cent. chance of a local success—these being the statistics of the Manchurian campaign—or to continue the attack next day with the whole army and lose thousands of men killed and wounded before any success is gained? Similarly on the defence, is it better to allow the attackers to gain a position close to our trenches, where there is every prospect that they will gain superiority of fire next day and assault the position, or to deliver a night attack against them, throw them back from their advantageous position, and compel them to attack again next day?

We will now turn to the last type of outposts which we need consider—namely, those required when a force is halted in column of route on a road. It may appear to be hardly necessary to consider such a situation when there is an advanced guard in front, which will also halt and continue its work of protecting the main body. The only point to consider is how this work will be carried out; whether the advanced guard is to remain on the road in

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its ordinary formation with a vanguard in front and a main guard in rear, or whether some companies must be employed on outpost duty.

If the advanced guard has already met the enemy, it will be busy attacking him, and it is unlikely that the main body will require any other protection, unless one of its flanks is exposed, when a flank guard would have been sent out and would be in position on the flank. If the advanced guard has not met the enemy, it will be in a position to deal with any hostile advance from the front, and can carry on its duties in exactly the same manner as if it were advancing. The only danger is that, as the whole force is halted, the advanced guard may adopt a defensive attitude, and permit the enemy to attack it instead of attacking the enemy. It is necessary, therefore, for us to consider the situation, so that we shall understand what our company may be called upon to do.

An advanced guard commander when he commences the day's march studies his map and ascertains, so far as he can from the map, the important tactical localities along the road, usually hills, ridges, defiles, rivers, or important villages and towns. He will consider each of these in turn, and, with the exception of one or two doubtful cases in very open country, will be able to determine what locality he must make good before the main body leaves some other point in rear. His advance, therefore, will be in the nature of successive bounds from one tactical locality to another. He will never halt between two of these localities, and he will make good the one in front before the main body leaves the one in rear. Some of these localities may be only a few hundred yards apart, in which case he will secure the one in front; some of them may be one, two, or three miles apart, when he will secure each in succession.

It is apparent, therefore, that when the main body halts

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the advanced guard will be halted in one of these tactical localities, and it is equally apparent that the advanced guard must retain possession of this locality at all costs; otherwise it will be driven back to the next locality in rear, which in all probability has been reached by the head of the main body. If the enemy suddenly appears and continues his advance, there are only two courses open to the advanced guard commander; he must either attack or defend. If he defends the locality he has reached, the enemy will be able to gain a good position close up to the advanced guard, and may even drive it back. In other words, the enemy will be given the initiative, and can make any dispositions he pleases entirely undisturbed. If, on the other hand, the advanced guard attacks the enemy directly he appears, the chances of retaining the locality already occupied will be greatly increased, and it should not be difficult to drive back the enemy's advanced troops and throw the whole of his advanced guard on the defensive.

The reason why the enemy should be driven back with ease is because the whole of our advanced guard will be ready to attack at once, and, at first, will only attack the enemy's vanguard, which should be badly placed for defence, and should be thrown back on its main guard. It might be argued from this that it is undesirable to have a vanguard when actually advancing, but the situation in that case is different; the advanced guard commander requires time to make a plan of attack and to deploy his main guard, and the vanguard gives him this time. Furthermore, the advanced guard commander does not want to waste time in deploying troops from his main guard to drive back the enemy's patrols and small detachments, and the vanguard does this for him. When the advanced guard and the main body are halted it is possible for the commander of the former to reconnoitre

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the ground to the front with a view to attacking the enemy if he appears on the scene; in fact he will be able to elaborate a more carefully worked-out plan of operations than if his advanced guard was marching along the road.

Our company, therefore, will not be required to perform outpost duties, but will be ready to attack the enemy together with the other companies of the advanced guard. Instead of posting sentries and preparing positions for piquets, the company commander, having been told the plan of attack, will be reconnoitring the ground to the front, ascertaining the facilities for his advance, and the difficulties that he will be called upon to overcome.

It may be said that the plan of attack cannot be prepared until the enemy appears upon the scene, this, however, is not correct. The enemy will not be in strength at first, it will be easy to see what ground in front he will make for, and, if there is any doubt about the latter, the advanced guard commander can certainly decide which locality he will attack at first, and where he will put his main strength, and inform the company commanders accordingly. In this manner the advanced guard will be continuing its duties of protecting the main body in rear, and also of driving back the enemy's advanced troops when met.

We must now consider what outposts are required to protect the exposed flank of a column when it is halted on a road, the necessary outpost troops being provided by a flank guard. Such a detachment is, practically, nothing more than an outpost line, constantly moving to its flank, in order to keep pace with the main body. It is quite easy to reinforce any part of the flank guard with troops from the main body, because if the column is turned to its right or left, according to whichever side the flank guard is protecting, it will be directly supporting

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the flank guard. The crab-like movement of the flank guard will resemble the forward movement of the advanced guard so far as the selection and occupation of tactical localities is concerned. Considering, however, the length of road occupied by the main body in column of route, part of the flank guard will rarely leave one tactical locality before it has made good another. The flank guard is likely to be spread out on a wide front, and since it is required merely to delay the enemy, who will consist probably of mounted troops only, it will act on the defensive. Every company, therefore, in the flank guard must be prepared, when the main body has halted, to turn itself at once into an ordinary outpost company and place the necessary sentries and piquets, the company on the flank nearest to the direction of the march endeavouring to gain touch with the flank of the advanced guard. The only difference between these and ordinary outposts will be that the company must be prepared at any moment to resume its crab-like movement in the direction of the advance of the main body, so that the piquets and sentries should not be echeloned farther to the front, that is to say the flank of the main body, than is absolutely necessary.

There is a golden rule in war that every commander, at all times, must be prepared to answer the question, "What shall I do if I am suddenly attacked by the enemy?" We may presume, therefore, that the officer commanding the main body, which is halted in column of route on the road, will be ready with a plan of action if his flank guard is attacked.

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CHAPTER XXI

THE TRAINING OF COMPANY SCOUTS AND PATROLS

THE work of an infantry scout is the most difficult task that a soldier can be called upon to perform in war; he is frequently by himself, or at best he has only one or two other men with him; there is no officer to tell him what he ought to do and with the necessary authority to see that it is done; he is apt to imagine that the enemy's scouts are lurking behind every bush, and that any moment he may fall into an ambuscade.

Scouting in war requires more personal courage on the part of the individual soldier than any other military operation, and therefore it is our duty to do everything we can to show him how to overcome the difficulties and dangers that he will encounter. The first step towards the attainment of our object is to make him understand that these difficulties really exist, and that scouting is not as easy as walking across the barrack square. It is very easy for an officer to send out a scout, but it is not so easy to tell him what to do when he meets the enemy, because the exact circumstances of the case and the nature of the ground in the immediate vicinity of the scout at the moment cannot be foreseen. Like all other training in war, we can never tell a man exactly what to do in every particular case, we can only give him certain general principles to work on, and teach him how to apply

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these principles on many different occasions during actual training in peace on the ground. By this means a man gains a kind of instinct to do the right thing rather than the wrong when he meets the enemy.

We must teach our scout that if he is nervous about the enemy, the enemy's scouts are equally nervous about him; that if he knows what to do, and does it, the enemy's scouts are almost certain to get the worst of the encounter. When a scout discovers a hostile scout lurking behind a bush, let him ask himself whether, if he had the choice, he would like to change places with that scout. Let him say to himself, "If the man behind that bush is as nervous as I am, I am not the least afraid of him, because I know that he will be thinking much more about getting to a safer position in rear, out of my reach, than he will be of driving me back." If our scout finds that his own position, as compared with that of the hostile scout, is not a good one, his first object should be to improve his position, and this can rarely be accomplished except by moving forward or to a flank.

Let us study for a moment the degree of excellence we are aiming at, and put down in black and white what we consider to be the attributes of a first-class company scout. He is a man who knows that he can get about the country with less chance of being seen than 95 per cent. of his comrades, and consequently than 95 per cent. of the enemy, because the enemy's soldiers are no better trained than ours. He has trained his eyes to watch for movement over the ground or amongst the bushes and trees in front of him, and he is confident that he will see the enemy before the enemy sees him. He knows that he has got a good magazine rifle with plenty of ammunition, that it will shoot straight, and that he can hold it straight, and that when he does fire he shoots to hit and not to miss. He is full of resource, and will gain by stratagem

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and "bluff" what he cannot hope to gain by force. He has belief in his own powers, and is confident that he is better trained and a better scout than any man he is likely to meet among the enemy. He must be, physically, one of the strongest men in the company, capable of moving rapidly over any class of country, and of withstanding hardships and fatigue, and he must thoroughly understand how to keep himself fit, and look after his body, his weapons, and his kit. He must be reliable in his reports and not given to exaggeration, he must know what information is useful, either as regards the ground he passes over or the enemy, and, if possible, he must be trained to describe on the map what he has seen on the ground. Finally, he must be a man who thoroughly understands the great advantage of offensive operations, and who can be relied upon always to gain ground to the front until he has obtained his object.

It is always a good thing to have a model to work on, and if every company scout is taught during peace that he must possess the above qualifications before he is really efficient in war, he will be thinking constantly during his training how he can improve himself in each detail, and what is the best manner of dealing with every situation which arises and every type of ground that he encounters.

Scouting can be divided conveniently into two classes, that required when the force is halted, and that when it is in movement either to the front, to the rear or to a flank. Scouting for a force when halted is far easier than when it is moving, because there is usually plenty of time available, and the methods adopted can be more deliberate and more carefully worked out, both as regards the situation and the ground. Occasions when the scout is sent out from the company when it is halted are usually of the following nature:

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(1) When the company is on the flank of a position occupied for defence, and there is some ground close to the flank which cannot be seen by the defenders Or when the company is in any other part of a defensive position and warning is required when the attack develops and the enemy is about to enter the fire zone of the company. For example, a fire trench may be very exposed to hostile artillery fire, and it may be undesirable to occupy it until the enemy's infantry approach sufficiently close to be fired upon by the defending infantry. In such a case the firing line will be kept under cover until the company scouts report that the enemy's infantry are appearing within view and fire.

(2) When the company is halted by itself within striking distance of the enemy, especially of his mounted troops. For example, when a company is performing the duties of escort to artillery in action, or to transport temporarily halted on a road.

(3) When a company is occupying part of an outpost position.

Occasions when scouts are required for a force in movement would be:

(1) When the company is part of an advanced, rear or flank guard.

(2) When the company is on the flank of an attack.

(3) When the company is on outpost duty and the outposts are being driven back by a greatly superior force of the enemy.

In addition to the above, scouts are required sometimes to take messages across unknown country, their

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special training being relied upon to ensure that the destination is reached and the message is delivered to the officer to whom it is addressed. If we study these various situations in turn, and, as far as possible, introduce different types of ground, we shall gain some general idea as to the methods to be adopted in other situations on different ground. It is best to commence with the training of scouts sent out by a company that is halted, because of the more deliberate nature of the operations. In fact, when the force is halted we can, so to speak, scout "by numbers," whereas when the force is moving we have to do it in "quick time."

The scouting required for a company halted in a defensive position is neither difficult nor dangerous, and can be dealt with in a few words. If the company is on the flank of the defended line, all that is necessary is for the scout to gain a good position whence he can see the ground to the flank. His task is to discover any hostile advance against the flank of the company and inform the company commander in sufficient time to enable that officer to meet the danger. If the situation is such that the company itself is in a position to do all that is required, it will be unnecessary for the scout to go far away from the company or to be able to see very far to the flank, because it will only take a very short time for the company to act. If, however, the officer commanding the company is not in a position to meet the hostile movement, and will have to send back word to the battalion commander so that another company can be sent forward, the scout must give longer warning, and consequently must go farther away from the flank or gain a position where he can see farther.

In the latter case the scout should be careful to avoid being cut off, because if he gains important information and is unable to carry it to the company commander he

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will be a source of increased danger to the company instead of securing the flank, because the company will be taken by surprise. At least two scouts should be sent out together on such a mission, partly because two pairs of eyes are better than one, and partly because one man can take back any news of a hostile approach and the other man can continue watching and come in later with more details regarding the strength and movements of the enemy. In fairly open country the scout will usually be required to go to some place on the flank, such as a small hill, the lower part of a convex slope, a wood, farm, &c., which hides the country beyond it. In close country it is impossible for the scout to go far without serious risk of being cut off. In such country, however, it is difficult for the enemy, especially his mounted troops, to advance rapidly, so that some time will elapse before the company is actually attacked.

When a company is occupying any central position in the defensive position, the required information can be obtained frequently by a scout placed actually in the fire trench. If, however, the view from the fire trench in this part of the position is bad, it may be necessary to send forward a couple of scouts some distance to the front before they can see far enough to gain their object. In this case there is no fear of the scouts being cut off, because there will be, no doubt, scouts belonging to other companies right and left of them, and in any case the enemy's advance would be directed straight towards the scouts and not round their flanks.

The steps to be taken in the second case mentioned above, when the company is by itself, but within striking distance of the enemy, especially of his mounted troops, are very similar to the first case, except that on some occasions it would be necessary for the scout to observe and report the movements of our own troops as well as

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to watch for the enemy (*see* page 411). A company can deploy so rapidly that it is unnecessary in most cases to send the scouts very far. For example, a company may be at the head of a column on a very foggy day, with an advanced guard out in front, and although the advanced guard will have sent out patrols and will be blocking the road in front, it is quite possible that a hostile squadron, either by mistake or by design, may have evaded the advanced guard and entered the line of advance between the advanced guard and the main body by a side road. A few scouts sent a hundred yards to the front will be able to see from twenty to a hundred yards in the fog and will prevent anyone approaching the head of the column without warning. Similarly, when one of the companies is halted opposite a side road, or immediately below a small hill in open country, which the enemy could occupy in the fog without being seen, it is desirable to send a couple of scouts fifty or a hundred yards to the flank and keep them there until the column moves on again.

It may be taken as a rule that a company commander is always justified in protecting his immediate front or flank by one or two scouts, whenever there is any possibility of the enemy being in the neighbourhood, even when there are other companies close by. In such cases the scouts would rarely go more than fifty or a hundred yards from the company either in foggy or clear weather, and they can be recalled at any moment. By adopting these simple precautions, a column halted on the march is no longer like a blind worm stretched out along the road, but has eyes along the whole length of its body. Similarly, a force which is halted will at all times be ready to meet the enemy, even if he appears from an unexpected direction. The main lesson that we want to learn is that, although advanced guards and flank

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guards are provided for the protection of the main body, occasions may occur when, owing to weather conditions or other causes, the surprise of the main body may be possible. On the one hand, the protecting troops should not in any way rely upon the main body to protect itself by scouts, and, on the other hand, individual companies in the main body should always be prepared to protect themselves whenever the situation indicates that surprise is possible.

When a company is halted by itself within possible striking distance of the enemy, its outpost work can be done entirely by scouts. The company commander need only ask himself the question, "What shall I do if I am suddenly attacked from this or that direction?" The answer to this question will tell him at once which localities he should watch or patrol in order to obtain sufficient warning of the approach of the enemy. He can send scouts to these localities, either in the form of standing or moving patrols, and keep the whole of the rest of his company in hand ready for any emergency.

The scouting required when a company is occupying part of an outpost position to protect the main body which is in billets or bivouacs, is very elaborate and demands constant training and practice in peace. Briefly, the party of scouts, usually called a patrol, is required to examine ground which cannot be seen by the sentries. The patrol leader must choose his objective, which will be some locality in front, where he anticipates that he will be able to gain the information he requires; he must choose the best line of advance to that objective, which will usually necessitate the selection of several intermediate objectives; he must advance in a formation which is suitable to meet a sudden encounter with a hostile patrol or party of scouts; he and his men must know how to act when they meet the enemy; finally, he

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must know how to send back the information he has obtained, and when he has completed his task he must return without being seen.

As usual, when training our men we must thoroughly explain the object of the operation, which in this case is to examine ground either by day or night which cannot be seen by the sentries. It is perfectly clear that by day the sentries, except in very enclosed country, should be able to see a great deal of the ground to their front and flanks, and that patrols who are sent out to examine that part of the ground which cannot be seen will be required merely to reach a good position of observation, provided the weather is clear. At night, on the other hand, the amount of ground which can be seen by each sentry is limited to a few yards or scores of yards, according to the comparative intensity of the darkness, along the approach he is ordered to watch. The whole of the rest of the ground to the front and flanks is absolutely unseen, though it is possible on a still night that any hostile movement may be heard at a considerable distance.

It is as well from the very first to understand that absolute security cannot be guaranteed, because a situation may arise where the country is perfectly open, where a hostile force could move across it in any direction, by compass bearing, even on the darkest night, and might run against a sentry and the piquet behind him with very little warning. Patrols sent out at night are intended to decrease the risk of such a surprise, and in any case the surprise is not very great because the sentries and piquets are always alert and ready at any moment to deal with such a movement on the part of the enemy. If this is the case we naturally ask ourselves the question, "Why is it necessary to send out patrols?" and there are some officers who go so far as to think that it is undesirable to

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do so at night, especially considering the precarious nature of the work and the strain on the men's nerves. If, however, we consider the situation of the sentry, we shall realize the great importance of patrolling even on the darkest night and when the country in front is perfectly open.

A sentry is not allowed to leave the place where he is posted, because he is watching in the direction where the enemy is most likely to appear, and the piquet is relying upon him to give warning of a hostile advance. If he leaves his post the piquet might be located by hostile scouts and rushed by the enemy without any warning. A sentry during the night will probably hear some noise or see some movement in front of him which may be caused by the enemy or by stray horses and cattle or may be non-existent. In any case the sentry will be greatly assisted in his work if a patrol is sent out to investigate the origin of what he has seen or heard.

In fact, if the sentry has made any report on the subject to the piquet commander, that officer will immediately desire to gain further and more accurate information, and the only way he can do it is to send out a patrol. If, therefore, we accept as a principle that patrols must go out at night we are only proceeding a step further by adopting the teaching of the Regulations and sending them out at stated intervals during the night. On each occasion when the patrol is sent out, information will have been obtained from the sentries as to whether they have seen or heard anything suspicious in the locality which requires to be specially examined. The area of observation of the outposts is at once greatly extended and the fact that patrols are frequently employed will add to the moral of the outpost troops, and enable them to offer a more stubborn resistance, and decrease the risk of panic which is always possible when a piquet

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is suddenly attacked. These night patrols, also, produce a corresponding but deleterious effect upon the enemy by increasing his sense of insecurity to the same extent as the feeling of security of our outpost troops is strengthened. An enemy advancing at night to attack and drive a hole in our outpost position will send scouts in front of his main body. If these scouts encounter one of our patrols they will at once imagine that they have struck the outposts, and it is probable that arrangements will be made to attack an imaginary piquet. Our patrol having slipped away to a flank, if possible, can open fire upon the enemy and still further confuse his ideas as to the position of our outposts and the true direction of his own advance.

Taking the most difficult case, therefore, and remembering that the main object of all outposts is to discover the enemy and delay his advance, it appears that there can be no doubt about the great value of the use of patrols as laid down in the Regulations. In fact, we might safely go further and say that outposts at night can never be effective without the use of patrols, and the difficulties and dangers which have to be faced by the few men, who are actually called upon to carry out the work, are fully compensated for by considerable decrease in the difficulties which must be met by the many men who are occupying the outpost position.

The employment of patrols in close country on any night, or in open country when the night is not very dark, appears to be equally necessary and is no doubt easier than in the first case which we have considered. In close country, whatever the degree of darkness, the enemy until he actually meets with opposition will certainly confine his movements to the roads or tracks. The risk of losing the way, and the great delay in traversing close country at night, would be too serious to commend such an opera-

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tion to any commander. If, therefore, our patrols can work forward along the flanks of the roads or tracks and ascertain if anyone is moving upon them, the information gained will be of the greatest value to the outposts. The fact can be reported in good time, outpost companies on the flanks can be warned, and patrols from these companies can be sent forward to discover if the enemy is advancing against them also. By this means the direction of the enemy's advance and the part of the outpost line which is threatened can be ascertained with considerable accuracy.

If we follow the movements of a patrol both by day and night we shall gain a good idea of what it will be necessary to teach the men, and how the various difficulties which are likely to arise may be overcome. Taking first the case of a patrol sent out from an outpost line by day, we have seen already that the object is to examine the ground which cannot be seen by the sentries, and to discover if the enemy is approaching the outpost position, and that the first matter to be decided is the line of advance to be followed by the patrol.

When standing anywhere in the line of sentries it is usually possible to see a good deal of the ground to the front, and unless the country is very open a covered line of advance can in most cases be discovered. This approach, however, must lead to some place whence it is probable that the hidden ground can be observed. The patrol leader, therefore, when selecting his line of advance must consider two things: first, the best place for his patrol to get to; and secondly, the best way of getting there. Sometimes cover can be found for part of the advance only, the remainder being exposed to the observation of any hostile scout who may be reconnoitring the outpost line. The question then arises as to whether it is better to take advantage of cover close to the outpost

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position, the remainder of the route being exposed possibly to the enemy's view, or whether it is better to advance over open ground at first and gain cover during a later period in the operation.

A study of the situation from the point of view of the enemy will help us, as usual, to arrive at a sound conclusion in this matter. The enemy's scouts, if they have been able to locate our outpost position, will be watching the line of our sentries, and would at once notice a patrol moving forward over open ground, and would be prepared to deal with the situation. When, however, our patrol reaches cover the movements of the men can no longer be observed by the enemy's scouts, and the latter will be uncertain as to where they are going to, and will get uneasy as regards their own safety. If, on the other hand, our patrol selects a line of advance which conceals them from view during the first part of their operation, but emerges later into open ground, any hostile scouts who may be on the look-out will not discover the movement so soon as in the last case, but they will be able to watch the later stages of the advance, they will lose their uneasy feeling, and will prepare to evade or to waylay our patrol. It appears, therefore, when there is no line of advance which is covered the whole way from the outpost line to the locality which it is required to examine, and when there is a choice of two lines, one of which is covered for the first part of the way and the other which is covered for the last part, that it is best to choose the latter.

When a patrol is crossing any open ground where the men might be seen by the enemy's scouts, endeavours should be made to deceive the enemy as to the real objective of the patrol. For example, the scouts can advance in the open, past the flank of some covered ground, and then return as though their task was completed, entering

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the covered way on their way back and again advancing towards their objective. Similarly a patrol, after crossing a piece of ground which can be seen by the enemy's scouts and reaching cover, should at once move some distance to a flank, especially if there is another strip of open ground to be traversed later. The enemy's scouts, having seen our scouts enter the covered area, will be watching for their exit opposite the place where they went in, and may not observe them emerging five or six hundred yards to the flank, or may mistake them for a second patrol and begin to get anxious about their own safety.

The lines of advance for patrols sent out from an outpost position should be reconnoitred, when possible, whilst the ground in front is occupied by the troops who are covering the establishment of the outposts. These lines are not in any way dependent upon the localities selected for the sentries, piquets, &c., and, therefore, the commander of the outpost company should send out patrols for this purpose immediately the company arrives on the ground. When the outposts are taken up without any covering troops, the latter must be furnished by the outpost companies themselves, and it will be the object of these covering troops to make good all ground in front of the outpost position whence hostile scouts could watch the dispositions made by the outpost companies.

The patrol leader, having been told the locality his men are required to examine, and having decided upon the various intermediate objectives to act as stepping-stones during his advance, must now consider the formation to adopt during the operation. He can never be certain that he will not encounter a hostile patrol, and therefore, he must be prepared at all times for such an event. If his men advance in one body the hostile patrol may allow them to approach and then "hold them up,"

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and our patrol in all probability will be captured. If they advance in an extended line it will be much more difficult for the enemy to capture them, but each man will be working more or less independently and may lose sight of his comrades, whilst it will be very difficult for the patrol leader to control the operations. There is plenty of time available, and there appears to be no reason why a patrol should not adopt the same procedure as that of a vanguard composed of cavalry and infantry when advancing along the road. The vanguard commander, having gained one tactical locality on the road, sends forward his mounted troops at a trot to secure the next locality in front before his infantry arrive at or leave the locality he has just reached. By this means the chance is reduced of the infantry being attacked unexpectedly by hostile mounted or dismounted troops when they are badly placed to deal with the situation—namely, when they are marching from one tactical locality to another.

The patrol leader when starting from the outpost position should send forward one or two men to gain ground in the required direction, and the remainder of the patrol should be lying concealed ready to open fire on any hostile scouts who may fire on our leading scouts, or who may endeavour to capture them. The leading scouts having signalled back "all clear" will be joined by the remainder of the patrol, who can advance in extended order if the ground is very open, or all together if the approach is concealed from the enemy's view.

In this manner the advance can be continued, the scout or scouts who go forward being covered at all times by the rifles of the men who are waiting in rear, and who are keeping a careful watch over the ground in front to discover if any attempt is being made by the enemy to capture the leading men. A hostile patrol seeing only one or two men advance might change position in order

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to capture them, and thus expose themselves to the remainder of our patrol. The patrol leader must then decide whether to join the leading scouts or whether to advance in another direction, so as to gain the flank or rear of the enemy's patrol and "hold them up" whilst they are busy "holding up" the leading scouts. The scouts who are sent forward in advance must carefully select their line of operations, always keeping under cover, if possible, and halting directly they come within view of ground which hitherto has been concealed. They should have a good look at this ground to find out if all is clear and then proceed on their way until they have reached the place where the patrol leader has ordered them to go. The patrol leader should arrange three signals with the advanced scouts, one to show that they have seen the enemy, indicating the direction, another that they cannot observe from the position they have reached but have seen no sign of the enemy, and a third that all is clear. The scouts must understand that in the first two cases the patrol will not necessarily follow exactly in their footsteps and may advance to a position right or left of the locality they have reached, but that in every case the patrol will act so as to support the leading scouts and get on the flank or rear of a possible enemy.

When a scout is endeavouring to discover whether there are any hostile scouts in front of him, he should put himself in the position of the enemy and consider the place he would choose if he were a hostile scout. It is impossible to lay down any rules to guide him in the solution of this problem, but every scout will endeavour to gain a position where he can see the ground in front of him in order to discover the enemy, and the ground on his flanks in order to secure his own safety. It is probable, therefore, that the scouts on both sides will usually make for any high ground in the neighbourhood. A scout or

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patrol on high ground has a considerable moral and material advantage over one on low ground, the men can see more of the country, their line of retreat is safer, and, when they want to reach a more favourable position to outwit and capture a hostile patrol which they have discovered, they can run down hill, if required, more quickly than they can run up hill; the only disadvantage is that they are more likely to be seen on high ground than on low ground, especially when the country is open, so that they must be very careful to hide themselves and crawl about on high and exposed ground instead of walking upright.

It should be remembered always that the first duty of a patrol is to get information, and information is greatly increased in value if the enemy does not know that we have obtained it. For this reason a patrol is required before everything else to discover whether the enemy is or is not in a certain locality; this information is, however, only useful to the officer who sent out the patrol, and, therefore, the next duty of the patrol is to get the information conveyed to that officer as rapidly as possible, especially when the enemy is met. The next in importance of a patrol's duties is to continue to observe the enemy when once he has been discovered, to follow him and ascertain the direction he takes if he retires, or to fall back if he advances in strength, endeavouring to keep level with him on a flank, and not retire straight in front of him. The enemy is certain to send out scouts in front of his advance but he may neglect his flanks.

When a patrol has discovered a hostile patrol, and our patrol leader has little doubt that the enemy has also seen his men, he should continue his forward movement, by a covered approach if possible, in order to gain the flank or rear of the hostile patrol, but he should do nothing to show the enemy that their men have been seen by him.

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If he has to cross an open patch of ground he should do so in this case in extended order and at a rapid pace, so that if the enemy's patro open fire on his men they will have a very bad target. Having gained a covered locality our patrol leader will rapidly change his position to a flank, approach the enemy's patrol from an unexpected direction, and endeavour to hold it up or in any case force it to retire. The object of great secrecy no longer exists, because the enemy's patrol has seen our men, and it is desirable to prevent him, if possible, from conveying the news back to his own people.

If a leading scout is fired at and the ground is open, and there is little prospect of his reaching the place he is making for, it is a good plan for him to drop as though hit, look around for a bit of cover, and then stagger towards it and drop again. Human nature will try and persuade the enemy to come out and inspect their "bag," and they may walk out into the open, where they will be an easy mark for the remainder of our patrol who will be concealed in rear covering the advance of their comrade with their rifles. Failing this our patrol in rear must work round the flank of the man who has dropped, make good the locality from which the enemy has fired, and then ascertain if their scout has really been hit or not.

Some people think that a patrol should never open fire on an enemy, but, once it has been seen by the enemy, there appear to be several reasons why the men should use their rifles, if by that means they can obtain further information and also compel the enemy's scouts or patrols to retire, or can prevent them from sending back information by capturing them. A patrol which goes out and does not return causes a feeling of uneasiness in the minds of the enemy in rear, and makes their further patrolling operations more difficult. A scout without the moral and physical support of his rifle will never go far.

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or obtain much valuable information, and the only limitation as regards using it is to gain the information without firing, but failing that to use it to the fullest extent.

The action of a patrol sent out from an outpost line at night varies considerably from that by day, especially when the night is very dark, or the country is enclosed. We have seen that by day a hostile patrol or scout is most likely to be found on the top of a hill, but by night the enemy is more likely to be encountered on or close to a road or track leading towards the outpost position. If our patrol advances along this approach it will bump into the enemy probably without any warning, and whatever happens the information so obtained is likely to be incomplete, because it may be impossible for the patrol to say whether they have met merely a hostile patrol or whether a large force is advancing against the outpost position. Furthermore, our patrol will have no marked advantage over the enemy if the latter is encountered in this manner, and the object of our training is to give them this advantage. It is desirable, therefore, for our patrol to use the road or track as a guide to their general direction only, and as an indication of the most likely place where the enemy will be found, but not to march along it themselves.

If the country on each side of the road is too difficult for our patrol to traverse, either because of dense woods and undergrowth, swamps, very rocky or precipitous ground, or thick hedges, it is quite clear that the enemy's patrol will also be confined to the road, in which case we must decide upon a plan of action when we meet it. Here we have a definite situation and a definite type of country, and, consequently, we must arrive at a definite solution of the problem. Our object is to place the enemy at a disadvantage when we meet him, either

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capture him or compel him to fall back and disclose what is behind him, and then follow him up to ascertain the direction he is taking. We must remember that there is no company commander close at hand to say what the men should do, there is only a corporal or lance-corporal with four or five men, who may not be specially trained as battalion or company scouts, and who are employed on this operation as one of their ordinary duties. The first matter to decide is our method of advance; the two main requirements being silence and concealment from view, so that we can discover the enemy before he can discover us. If we walk along the road in one body, say four abreast, we shall make some noise, and if the enemy happens to be halted when we encounter him he will hear us before we hear him. It appears, therefore, that the situation we should like to produce at the moment when we meet the enemy is that he should be advancing and we should be halted. It is necessary, however, for our patrol to get forward to the place it is ordered to reach, and it cannot do this by standing still and waiting for the enemy to come along, in which case our patrol would be nothing more than an extra sentry. The most satisfactory solution appears to be that we should always have part of our patrol advancing and part listening, in fact, we might adopt the same method that has been suggested already for day work namely, to send forward one or two men, but only twenty or thirty yards to the front, and then join them with the remainder of the patrol, constantly repeating the same operation. The leading men can go forward very quietly, whilst the rest of the patrol listen for the enemy, the leading men will then halt about twenty or thirty yards in front, and will listen for the enemy while the remainder of the patrol come up. The same formation should be adopted when the patrol has completed its task and is returning to the

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outpost position; one or two men should be left behind listening, the remainder of the patrol should retire twenty or thirty yards, halt, and be rejoined by the men from the rear.

The next question to decide is the action of the patrol when the enemy is met. If the leading men hear or see anyone approaching, they might be able to slip back and warn the patrol, then the whole party can line up close to the edge of the road and hold up the enemy's patrol directly it gets past them, if possible without making much noise. This would be done by the patrol forming rapidly across the road, presenting their rifles to the enemy, and being prepared to fire if the latter make any move. The patrol leader would then secure their rifles and bayonets, and send back the prisoners under an escort of two men about a hundred yards to the rear. The patrol will then wait a few minutes and ascertain if any other hostile detachment is approaching, and if not it will be best to take back the prisoners to the outpost position, because the patrol can do little more when hampered with three or four prisoners, and it would be most undesirable to allow them to escape. If a further body of the enemy is found to be approaching, our patrol will at once understand that they have captured a party of scouts belonging to the force in rear, and not a stray hostile patrol; it will be necessary, therefore, to get the information back to the outposts as soon as possible. In such country the enemy's advance could be delayed, if necessary, by the patrol opening fire down the road, because there is no longer any object in concealment. The enemy will know that they cannot surprise our outposts, and this will increase their caution, and may prevent any further advance. When any hostile scouts are captured the further operations of our patrol will be so hampered by their presence that it is best to get back to the outpost

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position as soon as possible, with the prisoners and the information obtained, when another patrol can be sent out.

In more open country at night the actual road or track should be avoided altogether, the patrol moving across country twenty or thirty yards from the road in a similar manner to that already described, the whole patrol as it advances carefully watching the road and keeping a good look-out in front in case the enemy's patrols are also moving off the road. In such country it may be necessary to make frequent halts, either to send a scout actually up to the road or to examine ground on the flanks, especially if any suspicious noise is heard. As already suggested it is a great advantage if our patrols have been able to go over the ground during daylight, fix landmarks which will be visible at night and discover alternative lines of retreat if the enemy is encountered in strength. The knowledge thus gained of the country immediately in front of the outpost company will greatly increase the self-confidence of the men who are sent out to patrol towards the enemy, and it will also ensure that they go to the places where information is required. A patrol moves very slowly at night, and if the patrol leader does not know his way about he is apt to think that he has gone a mile when he has, in reality, only gone a few hundred yards.

In every regimental exercise without troops one or two problems should be set dealing with the action of a patrol meeting the enemy, definite solutions being given according to the situation and the ground. Similarly, during collective company training, patrols should be taken out by section commanders and instructed in the best manner of advancing and how to deal with a hostile patrol when met; the hostile patrol should have been sent out beforehand, and told to advance in a definite direction at a certain time, taking all the precautions that would be necessary in war. It is only by this means that the

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men can be trained to deal with one of the most difficult situations in war: a problem which can be solved with far greater ease by savages, who live in constant fear of a possible enemy and whose habits and common sense teach them to take full advantage of the country, than by any civilized being who is accustomed to walk along main roads, and even then is not always sure of his way, and whose continued existence in no way depends upon the sharp look-out that must be kept, both by day and night, to avoid being taken at a disadvantage by a possible enemy.

We can now consider the work of a party of scouts who have been sent out to protect a force which is moving, and it is at once apparent that the slow and deliberate methods suggested for the force which is halted can no longer be applied. There are two conditions which we must be prepared to deal with: first, our scouts must accept more risk and consequently the force they are covering must be able to come into action more rapidly, which is easy because they are on the move; and secondly, speed in gaining ground to the front is essential, otherwise the movement of the main body will be checked.

Infantry scouts who are used in front or on the flanks of an advanced guard resemble closely the old type of skirmisher; they are required much more for protection than for gaining information, because the first practically includes as much of the second as is necessary in this particular case. If a commander who has sent out the scouts receives reports that they have made good certain localities to the front or on the flanks without meeting the enemy he has obtained all the information he requires so far as his infantry scouts are concerned, and knows that the enemy for the moment cannot disturb his column which is marching in close formation along a road or track, but which is ready to deploy very rapidly at any

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moment. The action of the infantry scouts on the flanks of the road depends a great deal upon the nature of the country and the enemy. These range from the type on the north-west frontier of India against a guerilla foe to undulating and open plains against a highly civilized and carefully trained European enemy, with any number of variations between the two extremes. In the first case the advanced guard is made abnormally strong, because it is necessary to drop detachments to hold every important feature on the flanks of the route until the main body with its transport has passed, these detachments eventually joining the rear guard. In the second case the object, which is not always attained, is to keep all detachments level with the vanguard, simply "making good" important localities on the flanks and then passing on. The advanced guard, as a whole, is required to protect the front of the main body and its infantry scouts are only required to give momentary protection to the advanced guard.

It may be argued that the enemy will occupy a locality just left by our scouts and may open fire suddenly upon our troops in column of route on the road. This certainly is possible but it is not probable, and is one of the risks which must be accepted. In very close country the enemy, mounted or dismounted, cannot move with any speed except on the roads, the mounted troops with the advanced guard have detachments on every road in front and on the flanks, and these would give information of the enemy's approach in ample time for the advanced guard to deal with the situation. In open country which the enemy can traverse with comparative ease the view is not greatly restricted, so that our scouts having made good one locality will see, probably, any hostile movement in the neighbourhood which can for the moment endanger the troops of the advanced guard who are in

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close formation on the road. The advanced guard commander will then deal with the situation and the work of the scouts is completed. It is evident, therefore, that the risk arising from the temporary occupation of tactical localities by the scouts is not very great when engaged in warfare against civilized nations, who differ from guerillas in that the former aim at defeating the whole of the enemy's army and thus bring the campaign to a rapid and successful conclusion whilst the latter cannot hope to do this, but endeavour to gain some small success, especially in the way of "looting" convoys, &c., taking the fullest advantage of the rugged or difficult nature of the country.

When a company forming part of a vanguard is called upon to send out scouts to the front and flanks it is advisable, if the country permits, to establish three groups. The centre group, which will be the smallest, will move along the road or track which is being followed by the advanced guard; the group should keep about five hundred yards in front of the infantry of the vanguard, so that even if the enemy succeed in cutting off the mounted troops of the advanced guard, fire cannot be opened upon our leading company at decisive ranges. These scouts can move in one body along the road, and would be prepared at any moment to form across the road and delay a hostile advance. They would also be useful to take back information sent in by the cavalry, and would be required to make good all important tactical points within two hundred yards of the road itself. Each party of scouts on the flanks would advance across country from one tactical locality to another, keeping about five hundred yards to the right or left front of the vanguard company. The men will have very hard work, because the going will be bad, across cultivation, through woods, and over streams. They will have farther to go

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than the company on the road, because at one moment it may be necessary for them to make good some hill five hundred yards on the flank, and the next to occupy the edge of a wood only three hundred yards from the road.

The scout leader should endeavour to keep as many of his scouts together as possible, and send only two men to make good localities in front and on the flanks, being ready at all times to move the whole of his party in any threatened direction. These pairs of scouts must move frequently at the double, and must accept the risk of finding the enemy in occupation of the locality they are sent to. They will, as a rule, be closely supported by the remainder of the scouts, and if they are widely extended they should usually find some cover and offer a bad target, if they suddenly encounter the enemy; they can remember also that the whole of the advanced guard is close at hand, ready at any moment to attack and drive back the enemy's advanced troops. The chief difficulty is to get the scouts back again, especially when the country is somewhat enclosed and single men are apt to be lost sight of. There is, however, the usual compensation of enclosed country, namely, that the enemy's troops cannot see to fire at the column in the road unless they are close to it, and consequently the scouts are not required to go far from the road.

The commander of each party of scouts, when sending off these pairs of scouts, should tell them exactly where they are required to go, and the direction in which he will be advancing with the rest of the scouts. He should also inform one pair of scouts where another pair is going, or has already gone, so as to prevent one pair of scouts mistaking another for the enemy. He should endeavour, when possible, to point out on the ground the route to be followed by each party of scouts when it is returning after making good the locality, so as to avoid unnecessary

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marching or delay. Each pair of scouts on meeting the enemy should immediately convey the information to the officer commanding the company they belong to, and then inform the officer or non-commissioned officer in command of their scouting party, the company commander being the most important person to be kept informed of the situation. After four or five miles the original scouting parties should be relieved, otherwise they will get worn out at a time when they may be called upon to perform even more important work during an engagement. The scouts used by the flank guard would be employed in much the same manner as with an advanced guard, except that each pair could be sent out direct from the company. A flank guard, as already explained (*see* p. 423), advances in open country from one tactical locality to another, it is spread out on a wide front, and closely resembles a strong outpost line constantly moving sideways, and ready at all times to occupy the important tactical localities in the vicinity of its various companies. In close country, where the movements of the enemy in any strength are confined mainly to the roads, cross-roads and branch roads become important, and in such cases a few cyclists are more useful for scouting purposes than men on foot. The scouts will be required to make good any important localities on the dangerous flank of their company as it advances from one tactical point to another, and endeavour to discover whether the enemy is occupying any position whence they can open fire suddenly at decisive range upon the company when it is in close formation. Our scouts will have very hard work getting back to the company, and it will be best to send out fresh pairs of scouts every time, telling each pair where the company is going, the exact place the scouts are to go to, how long they are to stay there, and the route to be followed to rejoin the company.

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There is no doubt that a company on flank guard must accept even more risk than a company on advanced guard, because of the great difficulty of scouting to the flank whilst advancing. It is advisable, therefore, to establish intervals of about fifty or a hundred yards between sections, so that the whole company can deploy rapidly to the flank. When moving over exceptionally dangerous ground the company may have to advance in file or even in single rank.

Scouts for a company forming part of a rear guard are required chiefly when the company is on the flank of the position which is being temporarily defended. Since a rear guard usually withdraws from one or both flanks, fresh companies are constantly becoming flank companies and the necessity for scouting is sometimes forgotten. A party of scouts sent out to guard the flank of the company should consist of three or four men, they should be told exactly where to go to, and when they get there one of the men should return at once to the company commander and report to him that the scouts are in position. This man should be ordered to wait with the company until it retires, he should then rejoin the scouts, inform them that the company is withdrawing and indicate the direction it is going, he will also convey any fresh orders which the company commander has sent. The party of scouts would then retire, keeping level with the flank of the company and never going far from it. In open ground the company when retiring is far more likely to be attacked by mounted than by dismounted troops, and provided the scouts can give sufficient warning to enable the commander to change front in the right direction and open fire, that is all that is necessary. In close country the enemy's cavalry might get round the flank of the company and occupy a fire position with dismounted men, in which case the company, especially if it is the last to

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quit the position just occupied, must assault with the bayonet to avoid being cut off, and no warning by scouts will be of much avail. Dismounted cavalry faced with a determined bayonet charge will probably get back to their horses. When the company is not seriously pressed in its retreat it is advisable to leave a few scouts to follow in rear, who can report the forward movements of the enemy; by this means the company commander can regulate his pace and avoid unnecessary haste, which is apt to be demoralizing to the troops.

The last few companies to remain on the position should send back a pair of selected scouts, in good time, to examine the ground in rear and fix upon any localities where the company can delay the enemy if it is hard pressed during its retreat. These scouts will also discover if there is any obstacle in rear, the passage of which might take a long time and endanger the retreat of the rear companies. Similarly, the commanders of companies who are the first to retire would, after passing over the ground, send information of the above nature to those companies who have to remain until the end.

Scouts required for a company on the flank of an attack should not be farther away than is absolutely necessary, because they may lose touch with the company, and the commander, relying on their information, might be surprised by a hostile counter-stroke. All that is necessary is for the pair of scouts who are sent out for this duty to ask themselves the simple question, "Am I in a place where I can discover the approach of the enemy, and inform the company commander in sufficient time to enable him to change front and meet the attack?" Scouts can be employed with advantage by any company in the attack in the manner already suggested in Chapter VIII. (*see* p. 143), namely, to discover suitable halting-places under cover on which the company

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can rest when out of breath; to creep up and mark the best fire position behind the crest of a hill; to fix and maintain the true direction in front of the company when it is traversing covered ground, either across a valley, through a wood, over a stream, &c.; to discover the existence of natural or artificial obstacles before the company runs into them; to ascertain the best and most rapid means of traversing an obstacle; to find out whether the enemy's side of an obstacle is exposed to hostile artillery or infantry fire or both; to go forward when the firing line is about to advance, whenever it is possible to do so without masking its fire, and lie down in the best locality for the firing line to occupy as the next fire position; finally, when the company is advancing over ground which is hidden from the enemy's main position, to ascertain if any locality in front is occupied by the enemy as an advanced post. These matters require very careful training in peace time, especially as regards small features of ground, but the work is very interesting for the men, they soon pick it up and become excellent judges of a fire position.

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CHAPTER XXII

THE USE OF SKELETON TROOPS DURING COMPANY TRAINING AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

THERE are a few general principles as regards the use of skeleton troops which, if carefully applied to suit the particular requirements of each case, will materially improve the instruction which is imparted to the company. The most important of these principles is that the company commander, when he has decided upon the lessons which he wishes to teach his company during the day, must place his skeleton force with their pole targets in such positions that those lessons will be brought out and no others. This means that no latitude can be allowed to the officer or non-commissioned officer who is commanding the skeleton force. The exact place where he is to go, the time he is to be there, what he is to do when he gets there, and the various times he is to do different things—all these points must be written down and explained to him beforehand on the ground. The company commander is not training himself in the solution of a tactical problem; he is not trying to defeat a hostile commander; he is simply teaching his company the use of their brains, their bodies, and their weapons, when they meet the enemy in the field. It may be more interesting for the company commander to be ignorant of what the enemy intends to do, but in nine cases out of ten the

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enemy represented by the skeleton force will, if given a free hand, completely spoil the day's work as regards the definite points that the company commander wishes to teach his men.

The next principle is that the men with the pole targets should have plenty of ammunition, at least twenty rounds per man for one day's work, and that they should fire whenever the pole targets are put up. This will teach the section and group commanders in the company to watch the enemy's position for any movement, and then fix their attention on the particular place where the movement is seen and thus pick up the target. When the skeleton force is attacking, the men, of course, will not fire when they are actually advancing, but the targets should be displayed during the forward rush, and again when the fire position is reached, the targets being constantly put up or down according to whether the groups are supposed to be firing or not. For example, if the skeleton force is attacking the company at training, and nearly all the pole targets go up together, the group commanders will keep their attention fixed on those parts of the attacking line where the pole targets have not appeared, because it may be anticipated that the enemy has opened rapid fire to cover the advance of one or more groups, and a good target will appear directly these groups rise up with their pole targets.

A skeleton attack with pole targets on part of a position which has been prepared by the company for defence is very useful instruction, because it impresses upon the minds of the men the lessons they have been taught when fixing the exact site of the trenches. Section commanders will have pointed out to the men the advantage of one position as compared with another, and during the attack of the skeleton force they can show that, if some alternative site had been adopted, the fire on the attack would

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not have been so grazing, or that the enemy would have been able to traverse unseen a great part of the ground which is now fully exposed to the fire of the defence.

If an obstacle has been constructed in front of the position, the skeleton attacking force should not be informed of its existence, because it will be interesting for the men of the company to see whether they have placed it so that it comes as a surprise to the attack, and if the men with the pole targets get mixed up in it. The various sections should be encouraged to compete with each other in discovering the first signs of the enemy's advance and in estimating the correct ranges. These can be ascertained beforehand by the company commander, and the accuracy of the ranges given by section and group commanders during the attack can be tested. It can also be ascertained whether the points in front of the position fixed upon as range marks have been well chosen, especially as regards the locality where the attack is likely to be brought to a temporary halt in order to gain superiority of fire, and whether the distances have been accurately measured. The skeleton attacking force should be directed to halt in a position fixed upon by the company commander which he considers the attack could not pass without gaining superiority of fire. After a pause in this position the pole targets should be reinforced by others coming up from in rear, and part of the fire of the defence can be turned against these reinforcements. Finally, the skeleton force will assemble close enough to the trenches to deliver an assault, when the defending company will issue out of the trenches and charge the attack.

This may appear to savour of child's play and to be very unreal, but all attacks are unreal unless there are bullets in the rifles, and the most we can do in peace time is to inculcate certain habits which will be useful to the army in war. One of the most important of these habits

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is for the men to assume, as a matter of course, that every defence must culminate in a bayonet charge out of the trenches when the attack gets unpleasantly close.

It is supposed, frequently, to be an excellent thing for a company, after it has prepared part of a position for defence, to place a skeleton force in the trenches and proceed to attack it. There is, however, a certain moral objection to this plan; the men have taken a great deal of trouble in siteing the trenches, providing head cover, &c., they have, naturally, some pride in their work, and consider the position very strong. If, therefore, they are taken out to attack it they will be apt to think that the attack will not be successful, and they may apply this idea to other attacks. It appears to be a much better plan to deploy the company in front of the position and attack it before the exact site for the fire trenches has been decided upon. The company will discover, in this manner, the difficulties that the attack will meet with, and endeavours will be made to increase those difficulties by the careful siteing of the trenches, by clearing the foreground, and by constructing obstacles in suitable localities. There is no objection to one company attacking a position which has been prepared for defence by another company on the previous day, and this system will be very popular with the company that dug the trenches if the attacking company pays its footing by filling in the trenches when the attack is over. The skeleton force can be placed in the trenches and the pole targets used in the manner already suggested.

It is evident from the above that there are no serious difficulties as regards the use of a skeleton force when the operations are confined to a definite attack or defence. When, however, the company commander wishes to train his men in the methods of attack which have to be adopted during an advanced guard engagement, or an

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encounter battle, it is not easy to dispose the skeleton force in a manner which will ensure an instructive day's work. It is useless to leave the conduct of the skeleton force to the light of nature as represented by the subaltern or the sergeant in command of it, because he will be certain to be "out for blood," and will take great pleasure in carrying out a wide turning movement and appearing in rear of the company when every one has got tired of waiting and is thinking about the dinners at home getting cold.

The company commander must arrange his skeleton force much in the same manner as targets are put up on a field firing range; in fact, he must plan out the whole engagement. We will suppose that he intends to carry out the attack of a company forming part of a vanguard meeting a hostile advanced guard. This means that the company must be told the situation, the company scouts will go out in front and the vanguard company will commence its advance. The scouts will discover the "white capbands" advancing towards a certain locality, the information will be sent back to the company commander and he will attack immediately. The leading troops of the enemy will be overwhelmed after a brief fire fight, and, being unable to retire, the skeleton troops representing the enemy will be assaulted. This first little scene requires careful stage setting if the fight is to be brought off on the piece of ground which the company commander considers to be the most suitable as regards teaching the men. First of all the commander of the skeleton force must be told to place a few men with pole targets a short distance in rear of the locality selected for the first encounter. A hostile scouting party of at least three men must be provided, and these scouts should move forward either at some fixed time or on some signal from the company commander. The first operation will be

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a game of hide and seek between the opposing scouts; meanwhile, the company on one side and the pole targets on the other will be approaching each other. The company commander will have directed the leading detachment of the skeleton force either to attack or else to occupy the selected locality which will be held until it is assaulted by the company. These skeleton troops are no longer any use, they can put down their pole targets, take off their white hat-covers and join the company; it is out of the question to allow them to retire, because they could not do it in war, and if this is attempted in peace a running fight will ensue which only teaches bad lessons and produces impossible situations. Another party with pole targets must be provided further back representing hostile reinforcements arriving upon the scene. The enemy's resistance will now be more serious, and if the ground has been carefully studied beforehand a struggle to gain some important tactical feature in front of the position already gained by the company will follow. Finally, the company will assault this second position, which will be occupied to the last by the enemy with the pole targets.

In the same manner we can prepare any engagement of a manœuvring nature, such as a counter-stroke against the company when it is supposed to be on the flank of an attack; an attack by dismounted cavalry against the company when acting as escort to artillery; an attack by the skeleton force on the company when forming part of an outpost line, and the subsequent pursuit of the company to the fighting position of the main body. In this last case it is best to provide two parties of skeleton troops, one to attack the outpost company and drive it back and another to join in later from a flank and compel part of the outpost company to change direction and deal with the fresh danger so as to avoid being cut off from the

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fighting position. This will provide a good exercise in section leading and make the men handy at rapid manœuvre. A rear guard action could be engineered as regards the skeleton force in a similar manner; two or three parties of skeleton troops being placed in suitable positions to strike in whilst the company is retiring and to represent hostile infantry or dismounted cavalry.

Similarly a skeleton force can be detailed to represent a hostile outpost company, in which case at least one hostile patrol of three or four men should be provided, and also complete sentry groups. The operations will commence with a trial of skill between the company scouts and the hostile patrol and sentries. These latter when driven back can occupy the position selected for the piquet and take up the pole targets which have been left there, they will then represent one of the piquets. The remainder of the hostile outpost company will be placed in suitable positions and each detachment will be told exactly what it is to do if attacked. For example, one piquet can remain and stand an assault to enable the remainder of the outpost company to get away. The latter will then fall back rapidly and occupy a delaying position in some suitable locality previously selected by the company commander. It will remain defending this position until our attacking company has gained superiority of fire or has occupied a position threatening the enemy's line of retreat. The skeleton company will then slip away and repeat the operation farther back, making its final stand on the fighting position which its main body is intended to occupy. This and a rear-guard action are the only legitimate forms of a running fight during training, and even in these cases the movements of the skeleton company must be so arranged that it retires before it is pinned to the ground by the attacking company. In fact, the attacking company ought never to

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see it except when it makes a stand in some carefully chosen locality.

The men detailed to form the skeleton force must understand that they are out to assist in the instruction of the company and not to learn anything themselves as regards their own movements which are all cut and dried. They can, however, learn a great deal by watching the methods of advance adopted by the company. The skeleton force is nothing but a series of targets put up to represent the enemy in different kinds of fighting. Any form of independent manœuvring by skeleton troops can be left safely to battalion or brigade training, if the commanders of those bodies care to employ such methods, which are little better when used with large forces than they are with small units like our company.

If there is any difficulty about getting pole targets, a good substitute can be improvised by cutting out a few squares of canvas, running wire round the edges to prevent them flapping about in the wind and stringing them on to a light rope two or three feet apart. A short stick should be tied on to each end of the rope and the targets can be raised or lowered by two men who will put up the sticks and tighten the rope.

We have now followed the company through many days' training, we have considered the moral aspect of most problems that the regimental officer, non-commissioned officer and man is likely to meet with in war; the difficulties and dangers have been brought out into the full light of day, efforts have been made to show how some of them can be reduced, and perhaps we can think of similar methods to suit other situations and other ground.

The training of an infantry company for war, considered by the uninitiated as one of the simplest things

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in the world, is in reality the most complex; it is one constant struggle against human nature, and incessant variations of the tactical situation and of the ground, to say nothing of the frequent changes in the company as regards the junior officers and non-commissioned officers; whilst, to the Britisher, perhaps the greatest difficulty of all is the make-belief inseparable from all forms of peace training. We have to imagine so much without the bullet, and sometimes our imagination fails us, while sometimes it runs riot; in either case the teaching is apt to suffer, but we soon discover our mistake and apply common-sense theories and practices which must always be the great stand-by of every soldier in war.

In spite of all these difficulties, our company commanders have every reason to be proud of their handiwork, because it is carved on human faces and human figures all over the world. Put a subaltern in the most remote corner of the Empire, and give him the most unpromising material to work with, and we shall find that with the assistance of a few non-commissioned officers of his own flesh and blood he will produce in a short time a company of men that will face the bullets in war, but who only a few months earlier would have fled for their lives before any threatened danger. The reason is to be found in the extraordinary faith possessed by every British officer in the excellence of any human beings who are placed under his control. Whatever other companies or regiments may do he is perfectly certain that his own company is all right. He has confidence in himself and in his men, and this confidence is conveyed in some telepathic manner to those under his command and increases enormously their military value. He is a gentleman himself, and he treats his men as gentlemen, whatever race they may belong to, but directly

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they lose their claim to this high title he lets them know it, and the evil influence, whatever it may be, does not flourish or bear fruit.

In many cases he has fought with his men alongside him in war, and each has learnt to value and respect the military qualities of the other. We know that some of us are braver than others, but we are all ready to fight, and those who are least brave have a harder task than the heroes. Our company commanders are proud to be the keepers of the Empire, and it is a satisfaction to them to know that this is truly the case, because in modern war, however good the commanders and their staff may be, no one can win the battle except the infantry soldier, and he cannot win except by attack.

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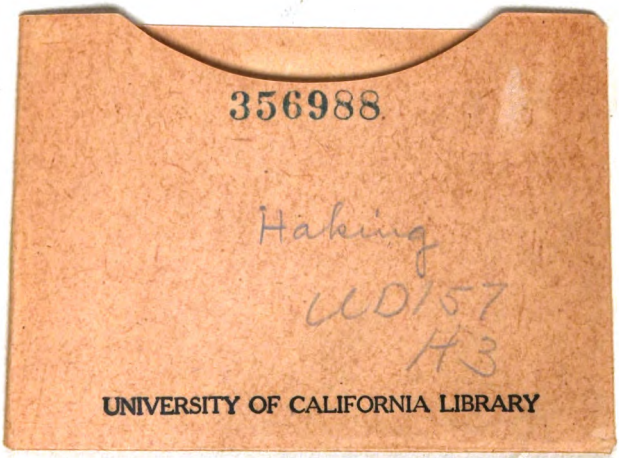
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